

Policies and Procedures

The following information is provided to acquaint you with the Policies & Procedures of **AIM** Counseling Center:

Session Length:

Sessions are 45-50 minutes in length. To maximize your sessions, be on time, have your payment ready, (make checks out to AIM Counseling Center), have future appointment times in mind, and come prepared with the topics you wish to discuss with your therapist during your session.

How to Contact Your Therapist:

If you need to make or re-schedule an appointment, or if you have a routine question during normal business hours, please call the office at (281) 996-6888. If you need to speak directly to your therapist, your phone call will be returned as soon as possible, but please remember your therapist may be in session or a workshop, and unable to call you back until there is a break between clients, or at the end of the day. If your call requires a lengthy conversation, or contains matters best attended to in therapy, you will be asked to schedule an appointment. Please do not use a 'quick' phone call as a substitute for your session. Such calls are subject to a minimum professional consultation fee of \$25--\$50 and are typically not covered by your insurance.

Phone Sessions:

If you wish to schedule a telephone therapy session, instead of one in person, you are welcome to do that with your therapist's agreement, and the telephone session will be subject to the usual session charges, co-payments and deductibles, and will require an appointment in advance. You will need to provide a credit card number in advance to charge the session.

Cancellation of Appointments:

We have a **24 HOUR CANCELLATION POLICY**. If you are unable to make your appointment as scheduled, feel free to move, change or cancel your appointment, but please give us at least 24 hours notice. **Failure to do so will result in a bill for the missed session for which you will be responsible.** Note: If you are using insurance to pay for your sessions, YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY WILL NOT PAY FOR SESSIONS YOU DO NOT ATTEND. You are accountable for the time you schedule to meet, and the therapist will set aside that time just for you. Exceptions will be made in unavoidable circumstances, with the approval of your therapist. Be advised this policy for 'no-shows' and late cancellations is strictly enforced. If you are a late cancellation, or a 'no-show' for an evening or weekend appointment, in addition to getting a bill for it, you may lose your ability to re-schedule your appointment during high demand times.

Payment of Service Rendered:

Payment for your session is due at the time services are rendered unless prior arrangements have been made. We take payment in the form of cash, personal checks, or credit cards. There will be a \$25 fee for checks refused and returned from your bank.

Emergencies:

If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room. To contact your therapist in case of emergency, call the main office number **281 996-6888**. Follow the emergency instructions and your therapist will be paged immediately.

Therapist / Client Relationship:

For the successful outcome of your treatment, it is very important that you have a good working relationship and level of trust and comfort with your therapist. If you should significantly disagree with, or feel uncomfortable with your therapist, please let your therapist know, and feel free to discontinue your treatment. We will provide referrals to other therapists upon request, or you can contact your insurance company for other names. In turn, we reserve the right to end the relationship with a client where the client has been non-compliant with treatment, or for non-payment of services. In the extremely rare event that this should be the case, your therapist will inform you and provide emergency services to you for a period of thirty (30) days, during which time, it is your responsibility to arrange for your continuing care elsewhere.

Confidentiality:

You may speak about anything discussed in your session, however, your therapist may not. Keeping the contents of therapy sessions private is an extremely important part of what makes a therapy session safe, and like no other communication. Consequently, your therapist will maintain strict adherence to the established ethical and legal guidelines to protect the confidentiality of what you discuss. The only exceptions to this are:

- (1) If you or someone else is in serious danger, in which case therapists are required by law to break confidentiality for the safety and protection of those in harm's way.
- (2) If an insurance company pays for your session, and requires that we provide your medical record for payment.
- (3) Certain legal situations (such as subpoena) or other court-ordered disclosures.
- (4) When your therapist consults with or speaks to other health care providers who provide treatment for you.

Notice of Client Privacy

AIM Counseling Center is committed to preserving the privacy of your personal health information. In fact, we are required by law to protect the privacy of your medical records and provide you with this Notice describing:

HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN ACCESS THIS INFORMATION.

- * We are required by law to have your written consent before we use or disclose to others your mental health information for purposes of providing or arranging for your healthcare, the payment for, or reimbursement of the care that we provide to you, and the related administrative activities supporting your treatment.
- * We may be required or permitted by certain laws to use and disclose your medical information for other purposes without your consent or authorization.
- * As our patient, you have important rights relating to inspecting and copying information that we maintain, amending or correcting that information, obtaining an accounting of disclosures of your medical information, requesting that we communicate with you confidentially, requesting that we restrict certain uses and disclosures of your health information, and complaining if you think your rights have been violated.
- * We have a detailed Notice of Privacy Practices available which fully explains your rights and our obligations under the law.
- * You have a right to receive a copy of our most current Notice in effect. If you have not yet received a copy of our current Notice, or if you would like more information regarding your privacy, please contact your therapist for more information.

Consumer Rights & Responsibilities

You have a right to:

- (1) Be informed of your therapist's qualifications: education, experience, specialties, training, professional licenses and certifications.
- (2) Receive an explanation of services offered, time requirements, fee scales / charges, and billing policies prior
- (3) Be informed of limitations to the counselor's practice and special areas of expertise.
- (4) Have all that you say treated confidentially and be informed of any state laws placing limitations on that confidentiality.
- (5) Ask questions about the counseling techniques and strategies used, and be informed of your progress.
- (6) Participate in setting goals and evaluating the progress toward meeting those goals.
- (7) Be informed of how to contact your therapist in an emergency situation.
- (8) Request a referral for a second opinion at any time.
- (9) Request copies of records and reports to be used by other counseling professionals.
- (10) Receive a copy of the Code of Ethics to which your counselor adheres.
- (11) Contact the appropriate professional organization if you have doubts or complaints relative to the counselor's conduct.
- (12) Terminate the counseling relationship at any time for any reason.

You are responsible to:

- (1) Set and keep appointments with your counselor. Let him / her know as soon as possible if you can not keep your appointment.
- (2) Inform your counselor of any hospital admissions or other emergency treatment that may affect or concern your treatments. (Your counselor has the right to terminate treatment if you fail to provide this information.)
- (3) Pay the required fees or co-pays for your therapy sessions in accordance with the financial arrangements pre-established or agreed upon with your counselor and / or insurance company.
- (4) Take an active role in your therapy -- help plan your therapeutic goals, and follow through with the suggestions and instructions of your counselor to achieve those goals. Your results depend on it!
- (5) Keep your counselor informed of your progress or difficulty in meeting your goals.
- (6) Terminate your counseling relationship with your counselor before entering into arrangements with another counselor.

If you have any questions, or complaints about this Notice, your Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, or your medical information, please contact me directly.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving you,

Julie Nise, MA, LMFT, LPC
Executive Director