



## **Informed Consent for Counseling Services**

This document contains important information about our counseling services and policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides new privacy protections and new client rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations. HIPAA requires that we provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices. The Notice of Privacy Practices applies to all the services you receive here.

### **Counseling Services**

The counseling services we provide include individual, couples, family and group psychotherapy for mental health and substance abuse. Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular problems you are experiencing. There are many different methods we may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy calls for an active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress, but there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

In your first session your therapist will evaluate your needs and offer you some sense of what therapy will entail including how you will work together to address your concerns. You should evaluate this information and whether you feel comfortable working with your therapist. If you have questions about our procedures, you should discuss them with your therapist whenever they arise. You have the right to ask for the rationale for any aspect of your treatment or to decline any part of your treatment. You also have the right to request another therapist.

### **Eligibility**

Counseling services are available to all persons who receive primary health care service through Fetter Health Care Network, INC. (FHCN); a referral is needed from your primary care provider to establish service.

### **Policies Regarding Appointments**

Individual, couples and family sessions are generally scheduled for 50 minutes. If you are running late for a scheduled appointment, please contact your therapist as soon as possible. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you may be asked to reschedule. If you cannot make a scheduled appointment, it is your responsibility to the clinic to reschedule or cancel.



### **Minors**

Clients under 18 years of age, who are not emancipated, and their parents/guardians should be aware that the law allows parents/guardians to examine their child's treatment records unless it is believed that doing so would endanger the child or there is an agreement to the contrary. Because privacy in psychotherapy is crucial to successful progress, parents/guardians will only be provided with general information about their child's progress and attendance during treatment. They will also be provided with a summary of their child's treatment, when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's authorization, unless the child or someone else is in danger, in which case, the parents/guardians will be notified. Before giving parents/guardians any information we will discuss the matter with the minor, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections they may have with what we are prepared to discuss.

### **Professional Records**

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep Protected Health Information about you in your clinical record. Your clinical record includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which your problem affects your life, your diagnosis, the goals for treatment, your progress toward those goals, your medical and social history, your treatment history, results of clinical tests (including raw test data), any past treatment records that we receive from other providers, reports of any professional consultations, any payment records, and copies of any reports that have been sent to anyone. You may examine and/or receive a copy of your clinical record, if you request it in writing, except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself and/or others or when another individual (other than another health care provider) is referenced and we believe disclosing that information puts the other person at risk of substantial harm. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. We therefore recommend that you initially review them in the presence of your therapist, or have them forwarded to another counseling professional so you can discuss the contents.

### **In An Emergency**

In some instances, you might need immediate help at a time when your therapist is not available. These emergencies may involve suicidal thoughts, thoughts of wanting to hurt someone else, or thoughts of committing dangerous acts. If you find yourself in any emergency situation, you may access care through the South Carolina Crisis Hotline at 1-(800) 613-8379. You can also visit the nearest Emergency Room and ask for the mental health professional on call.

Below are some additional numbers which are answered on a 24-hour basis and may be helpful to you in case of an emergency:

- **South Carolina Crisis Hotline: 1-800-613-8379**
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**