

Things You Should Know About Counseling

Community Care and Counseling of Aiken

Your Rights

To help you get the best possible benefits with the fewest possible side effects, you should be informed about your rights. Ask your counselor to review these with you.

1. You have the right to ask questions about the procedures used, and to have your counselor explain the usual approach and methods he/she uses.
2. You have the right to decide not to receive counseling from this particular counselor. If you wish, this counselor will provide you with the names of other qualified counselors whose services you may prefer.
3. You have the right to end counseling at any time with no other moral, legal, or financial obligations than those already accrued.
4. When necessary a summary of your records will be provided with your written approval. Your counselor will provide you with the necessary form and guidance if this is needed. The following will give you exceptions to this.

CONFIDENTIALITY: South Carolina Limits of Confidentiality, HIPAA

A federal law governing mental health and counseling information records has been passed. The name of this law is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). It establishes a national baseline of patients' rights to confidentiality. We would like to inform you that South Carolina's confidentiality laws for mental health treatment are even more restrictive than HIPAA's. However, HIPAA requires that we give you a form called the Notice of Privacy Practices which lists out the less stringent federal rules of confidentiality. After you read the following rules that apply to Community Care and Counseling of Aiken, ask your counselor questions you may have.

One of your most important rights involves confidentiality. Information revealed by you during counseling will be kept strictly confidential and will not be revealed to any other person or agency without your written permission with the very limited exceptions as required by South Carolina law.

Listed below are certain situations in which your counselor is required by law to reveal information obtained during therapy to other persons or agencies without your permission. The counselor is not required to inform you of his/her actions in this regard. These situations are as follows:

1. If you threaten grave bodily harm to yourself or another or death to another person, your counselor is required by law to inform the intended victim and/or appropriate law enforcement agencies.
2. If ordered by a court to do so, your counselor may be required by law to provide specific information from your file to the court.
3. If you reveal information relative to child abuse and neglect, your counselor is required by law to report this to the appropriate authority.
4. If you are in counseling or being tested by order of a court of law, the results of the treatment or tests ordered must be revealed to the court.
5. All records are the property of Community Care and Counseling and are governed by the policies and procedures of Community Care and Counseling as well as by ethical codes and standards of the state of South Carolina and professional credentialing associations.

Fees & Length of Counseling Sessions

Counseling sessions are normally fifty (50) minutes and are usually scheduled once a week. It is difficult initially to predict how many sessions will be needed. Your counselor will be better able to discuss the probable number of sessions after he/she has gained some knowledge of your situation, usually after two or three sessions. Your counselor will verbally discuss fees with you. Our counselors are on a variety of insurance panels. If mental health treatment is covered by your policy, we will assist you in verifying coverage, obtaining preauthorization for service, and identifying your co-pay and deductible amounts.

The Counseling Process

Counseling is a growth process that moves through various stages. It may be helpful for you to have an overview of what these stages are. First, on entering a counseling relationship, your counselor will spend time exploring the problems that bring you to counseling. This may take two or three sessions. During this stage you will get to know your counselor and your counselor will get to know you, how you view yourself, your marriage, your family, and how you and significant people in your life interact.

During this initial stage, it is important to discuss things openly and honestly. Your counselor will listen and help you find ways to communicate what you are thinking and feeling. Each counselor recognizes that an environment of trust is extremely important for clients to speak freely.

Next, after you and your counselor have explored your presenting issues, specific goals will be decided. This will be a joint effort between you and your counselor. Other individuals may need to be included in this process, such as a spouse, a parent, or other family members. Your counselor will have ways for helping you get the benefit of counseling. For example, who is included in counseling will help to accelerate the achievement of goals.

Third, after goals are agreed upon, a treatment plan outlining how these goals are to be accomplished will be designed. A treatment plan may include interventions that your counselor can provide. Other goals may be reached through referrals to outside professionals who specialize in that particular service. You and your counselor will regularly evaluate the progress you are making. Sometimes new goals and interventions will need to be added.

Last, counseling will conclude when your goals are reached. This should be determined through an open and honest agreement among all individuals involved, including your counselor.

Possible Side Effects of Counseling

Seeking solutions and making choices to deal with life circumstances can lead to discomfort in a number of ways. Exploring unpleasant events can arouse frustration, anger, and anxiety as well as lead to unexpected changes in unstable relationships. Depression and hopelessness may arise as new awareness emerges about self or family members. Making choices can also bring out the negative responses of others who would rather see you make different choices. Counseling may also impose limitations upon future life options. Using mental health insurance may be detrimental to you in obtaining future health insurance, disability insurance, or life insurance policies.

Spiritual Integration

Community Care and Counseling is committed to the integration of mind, body, and spirit in the therapeutic, educational, and consultative services offered. The emphasis on "spirit" is most frequently described through one or more of the following terms: faith, spiritual, existential, and theological integration.

We include a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual view of human nature, and respect for the client's religious or spiritual beliefs and practices resulting in a non-proselytizing approach to services offered. With this perspective in mind, staff training focuses on strategies for gathering information on client religious and spiritual beliefs and practices and incorporates those beliefs and practices into treatment planning and service delivery based on the needs and wishes of the client.

Benefits of Counseling

Individuals who choose to enter counseling for whatever reasons often find significant benefits from seeking to share their needs with another who is trained to guide them through this process. First, individuals, couples and families frequently develop a clearer understanding of patterns and goals and a deeper awareness of who they are in relation to other family members, spouses and friends. Second, the increased ability to resolve marital, family or other relationship issues because of acquiring skills and new perspectives is invaluable. Third, better life functioning and greater satisfaction may be attained. No matter what brings you to counseling, the benefits will result from a great deal of effort and emotional energy as you make changes. Therefore, significant discomfort may also occur.

Social Media Policy

In order to meet HIPPA and South Carolina confidentiality and privacy mandates as regarding Protected Health Information, Community Care and Counseling needs to address constantly changing methods of communication between clients and counselors. It is our policy not to respond to any form of communication that involves texting, Skyping, or Social Media pages (i.e. Facebook, etc.). You may email your counselor; however for reasons of security, he/she is not able to respond to your email. At this point in time, communication by phone is the quickest and most reliable way to contact your counselor. Please, make sure to alert our office to changes in your home and/or cell phone numbers.

Please, ask questions. You may have questions about your counselor, his/her qualifications, or anything not addressed in the previous paragraphs. It is your right to have a complete explanation for any of your questions. Exercise this right.

Cancellations with less than 24 hours notice are subject to charge.

