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INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELING SERVICES

Your decision to enter into counseling was undoubtedly a serious one arrived at after considerable thought. You may have been referred to Linville Counseling Services by your pastor, doctor, your employer or by family and friends. You may have come on your own initiative. In any case, the decision to come here was yours and we are glad you are here. We want you to know about our expectations for counseling and the policies we follow even before we begin meeting.

Linville Counseling Services (LCS) employs mental health therapists who have their Master's Degree or above in this field. LCS offers two types of therapy. One is called Christian Counseling which addresses the mental, emotional and spiritual health (Christian worldview) of clients. Our second type of therapy is called Mental Health Therapy which addresses the client's mental and emotional issues. Our clients choose which approach they want us to use.

Initial Meeting

At our first meeting, we will discuss relevant background data and talk about the particular concerns and problems that prompted you to seek counseling. We can then plan together the directions and goals for your course of counseling and discuss the first several sessions. It is often useful for clients to answer simple questionnaires to help pinpoint specific areas of concern and rule out others early in our relationship, thus saving valuable counseling time.

Length of Counseling

Counseling and psychotherapy do not provide instant answers, although sometimes situational problems can be dealt with in a very short period of time. Our normal practice is to use the first 2 to 4 sessions as a time for you and your counselor to decide if he or she is the best person for you or if you should seek counseling with another professional. We will determine the frequency and duration of your visits on an ongoing basis and in relation to your progress and prognosis.

You have the right, at any time, to end treatment whether your therapist agrees with your decision or not. If you wish to end our working relationship, we hope you will discuss it with your counselor in advance. If you wish to continue treatment with another counselor, we will be happy to refer you.

Use of Prayer and the Bible

When you choose Christian Counseling, LCS counselors work from a distinctly Christian perspective and typically incorporate the use of prayer and Bible references.

When you choose Mental Health Counseling, LCS therapists will not incorporate prayer and Bible references.

Linville Counseling Services follows and supports Madison Park Church of God's statement of faith, which is available from the church office if you desire more information.

Confidentiality

The relationship between counselor and client is one of openness, honesty, and trust. During counseling you may discuss information of a sensitive manner that you would not discuss with a spouse, friend, pastor, family member, work associate, or other. You are assured that the information you share will be held as strictly confidential. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule. If in our judgment you are likely to harm yourself or someone else, we are obligated to notify your family, the authorities, and the intended victim. If you report a situation involving the abuse or neglect of a child, we are bound by law to report the situation to the proper authorities. Please note that instances when we must break confidentiality are very rare and we in no way wish to discourage discussion of negative feelings toward yourself or anyone else. It is our ethical and legal responsibility to take these precautions.

In addition, Linville Counseling Services' counselors are continuously involved in peer and professional supervision as a means of professional accountability and development. Your counselor may discuss certain aspects of your situation with a peer counselor outside of Linville Counseling Services, however your identity will always remain confidential.

Appointments

Unlike other professionals who operate on more flexible and inexact schedules, our appointments together will be set for a definite time and duration (usually 50 minutes). Because of this fixed schedule no one will be waiting for your time if you do not use it. If you find you must cancel or reschedule an appointment, we ask that you notify us as soon as possible. **A charge will be made for appointments not canceled 24 hours in advance.** Your account must be kept current in order for us to schedule another counseling session with you.

Fees

The fee for one counseling session is \$110.00 per 50 minute session and is based upon time spent exclusively with your counselor. Your fee covers the therapist's time regardless of whether it is an individual, couple or family session. We do not file insurance claims because we are a small therapy office and do not have an insurance billing department.

We can provide you with a receipt that has a diagnosis code and CPT code that you can file with your insurance company. You will need to check with your company to see if they will reimburse you and/ or let it count toward your overall deductible.

Alternately, we offer a **Sliding Fee Scale** based on household income and number of people in your household. The sliding fee has 3 rungs of discount fees (\$80 per session; \$60 per session and \$35 per session). You can check out if you qualify for a discount on the "Counseling Fee Schedule" document.

You will need to submit proof of income from all earning members of your household to access the sliding fee scale.

You must choose one of our options. For example, you may not pay a discounted fee and then turn that fee into your insurance company. If you are going to use insurance benefits, you will be charged the standard fee of \$110.00 per session. You may choose to access our sliding fee scale even if you have insurance. But, you will not receive a diagnosis code and CPT code to submit to insurance because you have chosen to take the private pay discount offered through our Sliding Fee Scale.

Fees will be due and payable BEFORE each counseling session, whether you plan to charge your insurance company or not. We ask that you pay by credit card, debit card, health savings account card or check. LCS counselors do not carry change for cash.

If you ask your LCS therapist to provide other services such as report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, preparation of records or treatment summaries, you will be charged the regular \$110 per hour fee, but will be charged only for the actual time spent. (10 minutes = \$18.33 charge for example).

We will be happy to discuss fees with you initially, or at any time during counseling.

Emergencies

Linville Counseling Services does not provide 24 hour coverage for emergencies. If you need assistance when an LCS therapist is not available, then contact your health care provider or go to a hospital emergency room.

*****SERVICES LCS DOES NOT PROVIDE*****

Matters such as court testimony, evaluations, and child custody are NOT within the scope of Linville Counseling Services' practice. Our therapists do not testify in court on behalf of clients because we believe it impedes our therapeutic relationship and creates a potential conflict of interest. If you become involved in legal proceedings in which a judge orders your counselor's participation, you will be expected to pay for all of the counselor's professional time, including preparation and transportation cost, even if he or she is called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, LCS charges \$165 per hour (time and a half) for preparation to appear at any legal proceeding (court testimony, depositions, affidavits, letters to court, etc.), whether the appearance occurs or is dismissed. A Two-hour minimum fee(2 hours x \$165 per hour=\$330) will be charged for the appearance of your counselor at the courthouse, whether the therapist testifies or not. \$165 per hour will be charged after the first hour, no matter what portion of that hour was used because our appointment times run by the hour and the therapist cannot schedule another client if part of the hour was spent at the courthouse. Please ask your attorney to schedule witnesses so that you can minimize this cost.

Contacting your therapist

LCS therapists do not have individual phones at the church so leaving a phone message for your therapist is not possible. We do have a business phone line (765-639-6192) that our office manager answers during her office hours. You may utilize the voicemail on this phone to request to schedule or change appointments. Our office manager's ours are part time, so please leave your name and phone number so that she can follow up with you during her next work time.

You may choose to contact your therapist via his/ her email address. LCS uses Google calendar and email. If you choose to contact your therapist by email you are indicating that you recognize the dangers and potential for breach of confidentiality associated with email and are willing to accept the risk. Please also realize that your therapist cannot guarantee that he or she will have time to read and respond immediately. LCS therapists are open to receiving email messages and will read what you write, but may not send a detailed response. Please do not interpret that as a lack of interest; it is just not feasible for your counselor to provide therapeutic services via email. We can discuss what you've written in our next therapy session.

Relationship to Madison Park Church of God

Starting on October 1, 1999 Madison Park Church of God (MPChoG) entered into an agreed upon understanding with Linville Counseling Services to provide counseling. The church provides office space and in-kind services to LCS and LCS provides Christian Counseling for parishioners that are in line with the Christian worldview of MPChoG. The therapists are not employees of Madison Park Church of God, therefore client specific information cannot be shared from your therapist to the pastoral staff unless you provide written authorization for us to do so.

Concluding Remarks

Counseling is a two-way effort entailing mutual respect, responsibility, and consideration between you and your counselor. Both must make a commitment to the process and stick with it even when it becomes difficult or uncomfortable. A typical client can expect for their concerns or problem situations to intensify initially in counseling, but will usually experience a more lasting relief once this point has passed. The policies outlined above and discussed in sessions are designed to make your counseling experience more productive and successful. Please feel free to discuss any of these with your counselor at any time during the course of counseling.