

**The Samaritan Counseling Center
2911 Zelda Road
Montgomery, Alabama 36106**

Informed Consent for Counseling or Consultation Services

Welcome The Samaritan Counseling Center welcomes you as a client. It is important for you to be informed about the nature of counseling or psychotherapy, policies and procedures governing the therapy process, fees charged for our services and your rights as a client. At the end of this statement there is a place for you to sign, signifying your general consent to therapy.

Counseling in This Center The Samaritan Counseling Center provides counseling for a variety of issues including depression, anxiety, adjustment problems, difficulties at work, relationship problems and marital and family conflicts. The goals of therapy range from the relief of symptoms to significant life changes based on acquiring a better understanding of one's personal, interpersonal, and social circumstances. Center clinicians practice integrative care emphasizing care for the mind, body and spirit of our clients.

The Center employs state licensed counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychologists and social workers. All clinicians work within the standards of practice and ethical guidelines of state licensing laws, professional associations, and of the Samaritan Institute. Samaritan clinicians also recognize that incorporating the values, beliefs, and religious affiliations of clients enhance the process of changing, growing and healing if clients want these factors to be considered in their therapy. Because the Center is a place of healing, weapons of any kind are not allowed on Center property.

Therapy Process Therapy begins with an *intake process* designed to evaluate your needs and determine the best clinician to work with you. This process begins when the intake coordinator checks your insurance and gets a brief statement about your needs. The intake coordinator consults the Executive Director of Clinical Services, who assigns you to a specific clinician. The intake coordinator then calls you to schedule an appointment. Of course, we honor your requests for specific clinicians if possible.

The *therapy process* itself may take many forms, depending on the issues that need to be addressed and how far you wish to go in dealing with them. There is some risk in the therapy process because it is about change and exploration. You may feel worse initially as you work through the uncomfortable feelings you uncover in therapy process. Treatment is guided by a *treatment plan* that you and your therapist both agree to pursue. Therapy ends when the work is done, or when you decide to end it.

You may ask your clinician any questions about their credentials, education and areas of practice during the first session or examine the clinician's information on our web site. The clinician will explain the methods, duration of therapy and fees during the first session.

Each clinician is responsible for responding to the needs of their clients after hours. The clinician will provide you with contact information and explain what constitutes appropriate contact. You will be charged for any after hours phone call that lasts more than fifteen minutes. The Center does not provide after hours emergency care. Should you need emergency services, you should call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Therapy Policies and Procedures

Your Rights as a Client. You have all of the rights established by federal and state law. These include the rights of consenting to treatment, asking about your clinician's qualifications, requesting a different therapist, ending treatment at any time, accessing the client grievance procedures, asking questions about any procedure, refusing any procedure and having your treatment records kept in confidence (see confidentiality statement below). You have the right to know that if family members are involved in therapy with you, we do not keep secrets from those family members with a legitimate need to know.

Confidentiality. Therapy is strictly confidential and your discussions will not be revealed to other persons or agencies without your written permission, except in legally mandated situations discussed below. Legal situations when a clinician, must report information to the appropriate persons or agencies, include: a) if you threaten grave bodily harm or death to yourself or someone else; b) if you reveal information about suspected child or elder abuse; and c) if ordered by a court of law.

If your therapy is court ordered, the results of treatment or tests must be revealed to the court. If you do not give consent for disclosure or if you want to fight the court ordered disclosures, you must provide the funds for an attorney to fight this for you without cost to the clinician.

Clinicians are *permitted* by law to reveal confidential information obtained during therapy *without your permission* if you file civil or criminal charges against the clinician in legal proceedings or if you file an ethics complaint with the licensure board. In these instances, clinicians are permitted to use treatment records to defend against these charges or complaints.

Your records may be viewed by Samaritan Center supervisors, consultants and accreditation reviewers for purposes of diagnosis, treatment, and quality control as it is standard professional practice. Those reviewing your records are bound by the same

confidentiality as Center clinicians. In all other instances, your written permission is required before your clinician or the Center can disclose your protected health information.

Other clients have the same rights of confidentiality that you do. If you see other clients as they come and go from our Center, you have the right to expect that they will not divulge your client status to anyone, and they have the right to expect that you will protect their confidential status.

Appointments and Cancellations. Clinicians schedule all return appointments unless the clinician specifically asks the office to make the appointment. Any scheduled appointment must be cancelled or rescheduled 24 hours in advance with the front office, your clinician or left on voice mail. Failure to give 24 hour notification may result in a charge up to the amount of your fee. This charge is not covered by insurance. The clinician reserves the right to refuse to make any additional appointments after two no-shows, late cancellations, excessively late arrivals or failure to pay fees. Clinicians are to not be expected to see clients for a full session when clients are late for appointments.

Insurance and Other Third-Party Payments. If your insurance or third-party coverage (e.g., a managed care organization, employee assistance program or Church) pays for therapy, you are responsible for giving the Center this information on the Intake Form and the Client Demographic Form. Appointment lengths are determined by the insurance company and are usually not more often than once a week. Appointments are generally 45 minutes unless longer sessions are preapproved by your insurance company. If the therapy goes beyond what the insurance company agrees to pay for, you are personally responsible for the fees charged.

The Center must have a written agreement with Churches or other private parties who intend to pay for your therapy. The Center will file your claims if the information you give us is accurate and complete. The Center does not guarantee that your insurance or other coverage will pay your claim. You are responsible for the deductibles, co-payments and account balances not covered by the insurance or third-party company.

Ending Therapy. Optimally, therapy ends by mutual agreement of the client and clinician. However, you may choose to end therapy at any time. The clinician reserves the right to discontinue therapy due to non-compliance of treatment recommendations, failure to attend therapy, referral of the client elsewhere for therapy or if the clinician determines that therapy is no longer effective. It is preferred that you have at least one face-to-face concluding appointment with your therapist rather than terminating by telephone, mail, or by not showing up.

If you have not attended an appointment within three months of your last completed appointment, your failure to participate in therapy is considered an intention to end the therapeutic relationship. Your status as an active client will be terminated. If you would like for your therapy to continue elsewhere, SCC will refer you to another qualified provider. Although you may end therapy at any time, it is preferred that you have at least one face-to-face concluding appointment with your therapist rather than terminating by telephone, mail, or by not showing up. Although your therapeutic relationship may have ended, your billing account will not be formally closed until your balance is paid in full. We ask that you complete a Client Satisfaction Form that is used to elicit feedback on the therapy process. This is a valuable tool to increase the Center's improve the quality of our services. You may resume therapy at SCC again at any time by initiating an intake by phone or through the web site.

Court Appearances and Documentation Fees. Clinicians do not normally make court appearances. If court ordered, clinicians are legally bound to comply with the court order. However, the charge of \$300 per hour for any court related activities will be charged to the attorney requesting the court order. This includes travel to and from the Center in 30 minute blocks. Clinicians will block their schedules for a minimum of four hours whether clinicians actually testify or not. Half of the fee must be paid prior to the clinician leaving the office and the remainder is due prior to leaving the court or deposition. Clinicians will not be on call for court testimony without receiving a retainer for the time scheduled to be on call at the rate mentioned above. We do not apply scholarship assistance to time spent making court appearances. We reserve the right to file a complaint with the Alabama Bar Association for non-payment if necessary.

If clinicians prepare correspondence or documentation for you during a clinical session, no fee will be charged. However, a \$50 per hour prorated fee will be charged for all correspondence prepared outside of clinical sessions. You will be charged \$15 for copying and forwarding records if correspondence is not necessary.

Fees and Payment. The therapy Fee Agreement is completed in the initial appointment will state your fee and payment requirements. Payment is due at the time of your appointment and you may pay by cash or check. Any returned checks marked insufficient funds will result in a charge to you of \$25.00 plus bank charges. Your signature indicates a legal binding contract with the Center to pay the Fee Agreement.

If you fail to pay a delinquent account after 90 days, you automatically waive your right to confidentiality regarding financial information and are subject to all fees associated with payment recovery. Recovery of delinquent payments may involve a collection agency or attorneys and you will be responsible for all costs of collection.