

ANCHOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELING CENTER

INFORMED CONSENT/COUNSELING AGREEMENT

Confidentiality

Your counselor at **Anchor Marriage and Family Counseling Center (AMFCC)** has a responsibility to safeguard information about you obtained during counseling. All identifying information about your assessment and treatment is kept confidential, except as mandated by law. A signed release will be obtained from you for release to sources not mandated by law. In some circumstances, mental health professionals are required by law to reveal information obtained during therapy to other persons or agencies without your written consent. In such situations, AMFCC is not required to inform you of this release. Please note the following exceptions to confidentiality:

- Confidentiality does not apply to cases of suspected abuse/neglect of children or the elderly.
- Confidentiality does not apply to cases of potential harm to self or others.
- A mental health professional may disclose confidential information in proceedings brought by a client against a professional.
- Confidentiality does not apply to cases involving criminal proceedings, except communications by a person voluntarily involved in a substance abuse program.
- Confidentiality may not apply in cases involving legal proceedings affecting the parent-child relationship.
- Confidentiality may not apply to cases involving a minor child. In such cases, the mental health professional may advise a parent, managing conservator or guardian of a minor, with or without minor's consent, of the treatment needed by or given to the minor. Insurance and managed care companies require personal identification information, diagnosis, symptoms, treatment goals, prognosis, evaluation of progress, and other information before reimbursement is considered. Such companies may also maintain the right to have a copy of your records. Information regarding such releases is covered in the HIPPA information you have received.

Confidentiality and Technology

Some clients may choose to use technology in their counseling sessions. This includes but is not limited to online counseling via Skype, telephone, email, text or chat. Due to the nature of online counseling, there is always the possibility that unauthorized persons may attempt to discover your personal information. Your counselor will take every precaution to safeguard your information but cannot guarantee that unauthorized access to electronic communications could not occur. Please be advised to take precautions with regard to authorized and unauthorized access to any technology used in counseling sessions. Be aware of any friends, family members, significant others or co-workers who may have access to your computer, phone or other technology used in your counseling sessions. Should a client have concerns about the safety of their email, your counselor can arrange to encrypt email communication with you.

Our Counseling Staff works as a Team. Your Therapist may consult with another Therapist to provide the best possible care. These consultations are for training and professional purposes and are kept strictly confidential.

Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA)

We are required by law to protect the privacy of your health information. Although your counseling record is the physical property of AMFCC, the information contained in your health record belongs to you. Here is a summary of your rights under HIPAA.

You have the right to:

- request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information
- inspect and obtain a copy of your health record
- amend your health record as provided by regulation
- obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information as provided by law
- request communications of your health care information by alternative means or locations
- revoke your authorization to use or disclose health information except to the extent that action has already been taken

Record Keeping

Your counselor may keep records of your counseling sessions and a treatment plan which includes goals for your counseling. These records are kept to ensure a direction to your sessions and continuity in service. They will not be shared except with respect to the limits to confidentiality discussed in the Confidentiality section. Should the client wish to have their records released, they are required to sign a release of information which specifies what information is to be released and to whom. Records will be kept for at least 7 years but may be kept for longer. Records will be kept either electronically on a USB flash drive or in a paper file and stored in a locked cabinet in the counselor's office.

The Benefits and Risks of Counseling

There are many **benefits** to counseling. One major benefit that may be gained from participating in counseling is the resolution of the concerns brought to therapy. Other possible benefits may be a better ability to cope with marital, family and other interpersonal relationships, and /or a greater understanding of personal goals and values. Counseling can help you develop coping skills, make behavioral changes, reduce symptoms of mental health disorders, improve the quality of your life, learn to manage anger, learn to live in the present and many other advantages. There are certain **risks** involved in counseling. Counseling is an intensely personal process which can bring unpleasant memories or emotions to the surface. There are no guarantees that counseling will work for you. Clients can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. Progress may happen slowly. Counseling requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions. You may experience a variety of negative emotions during therapy as you remember and therapeutically resolve unpleasant events. Seeking to resolve concerns between family members, marital partners, and other persons can similarly lead to discomfort as

well as relationship changes that may not be originally intended. The greatest risk of counseling is that it may not by itself resolve your concerns. Psychotherapy is a collaborative process and the progress you make will depend in large measure upon your investment in the process.

Goals of Counseling

There can be many goals for the counseling relationship. Some of these will be long term goals such as improving the quality of your life, learning to live with mindfulness and self-actualization. Others may be more immediate goals such as decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms, developing healthy relationships, changing behavior or decreasing/ending drug use. Whatever the goals for counseling, they will be set by the clients according to what they want to work on in counseling. The counselor may make suggestions on how to reach that goal but you decide where you want to go.

Cost of Service

The cost of service is generally \$120.00 per session. Initial session and assessment is \$165.00. We reserve the right to use a scaled charge that is income dependent.

Payment of Fees

All fees should be paid at the time the service is rendered. Cash, personal check, and credit cards are welcome and will be processed prior to the session. Insurance clients must pay co-pay at the time service is rendered. Insurance card must be presented at the time of service. If I am not a participating provider for your insurance plan, I will supply you with a receipt of payment for services, which you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please note that not all insurance companies reimburse for out-of-network providers. If you prefer to use a participating provider, I will refer you to a colleague.

Telephone Communications

The counselor sees clients by appointment during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. (clients seen by appointment at or after 6:30 p.m. weekdays and on weekends are seen at an after-hours rate of \$40 extra dollars per hour.) If you have a crisis during business hours, call AMFCC and make an appointment and the counselor will make every effort to fit you in.

Crisis Policy Internet and Telephone Communications

The counselor sees clients by appointment during normal business hours Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. (clients seen by appointment at or after 6:30 p.m. weekdays and on weekends are seen at an after-hours rate of \$40 extra dollars per hour.) If you have a crisis during business hours, call AMFCC and make an appointment and the counselor will make every effort to fit you in.

Appointments/Cancellations

Appointments will ordinarily be 50-60 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. The time scheduled for your

