



## OFFICE POLICIES

### OFFICE POLICIES AND PATIENT AGREEMENT:

Welcome to the counseling and coaching practice at Resolve Counseling Center. This document contains important information about professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting.

\*The words therapeutic and therapy can be exchanged with coaching. Policies and consent forms are the same for Coaching or Therapy clients.

### THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Therapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the clinician and client, as well as the concerns addressed. A variety of methods may be utilized in the therapy process. A very active effort is required by both the therapist and the client in order to achieve the most successful results. Honesty and forthrightness are also critical components for all parties involved in the therapy process. Best results are typically achieved by clients who work on issues in between sessions. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, therefore, selectivity and a high comfort level with the therapist are important. If a client has questions about procedures an open dialogue is always welcome. If concerns persist another therapist can be recommended that might be a better fit. There are benefits and risks to the counseling process. Therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of one's life, uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness may be experienced. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress, but there are no guarantees of what each individual client will experience.

### MEETINGS:

Initial meetings will involve a discussion regarding your needs and goals. Additionally, initial sessions involve obtaining a thorough client history. After the completion of initial sessions both client and therapist should have feedback regarding the continuation or discontinuation of the therapy process together. Feedback and insight are a critical component to therapy. It may be necessary to dedicate an entire session to feedback, although this process is always ongoing. Most appointments are scheduled weekly or biweekly at an agreed upon time, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, the client is responsible for therapy charges unless a 24 hour advance notice of cancellation is provided. Exceptions to this policy would only occur if both the therapist and client agree that circumstances existed beyond client control. If we are able to find another time to reschedule the appointment within the same week, there will be no charge for the missed appointment. Clients often enjoy the ease of standing appointments. If standing appointments are cancelled three weeks in a row, the client will lose the standing appointment but will maintain the option to schedule during each appointment.



#### TIMING:

The goal is always to begin therapy appointments on time. Due to the nature of this work, there may be times when an appointment begins late. Should a session begin late due to therapist work with another client (off-site or on-site) the agreed upon number of session minutes will still be applied. Unfortunately, if the client is running late the therapist is generally will need to end the session at the originally scheduled time. If a client is going to be late please text the therapist. If the therapist knows that the therapy schedule is off, a text will be sent to the client. Please keep in mind that the therapist does not always have the ability to contact a client as it is inappropriate to conduct business during therapy sessions. If a client is more than 15 minutes late without notice the client may not be seen.

#### THERAPY RELATIONSHIP:

Developing a collaborative therapeutic relationship is one of the biggest predictors of therapy success. As a result, it is vitally important to ensure our therapeutic relationship is working well so that you may feel able to explore concerns and emotions in a safe space. Therapy never involves sexual, business, or any other dual relationships that could impair therapist objectivity, clinical judgment, therapeutic effectiveness, or could be exploitative in nature. It is extremely natural and common to develop feelings of friendship between client and therapist. Due to ethical standards set forth by licensing agencies, these relationships are deemed inappropriate and will not be engaged in. Dual relationships have a high potential to compromise and even harm the client- therapist relationship. If there are concerns during the course of therapy, there is an open invitation to dialogue and work through any concerns that have presented themselves. As the therapeutic relationship is ending (temporarily or permanently) it is helpful to have at least two sessions to process the work completed, discuss reactions to ending the therapy process, and provide any further information and/or referrals that could be helpful in the future.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY:

A note about confidentiality in the context of couples work. It is always the therapist goal to build trust individually and within the couple dyad. Couples work is MOST effective when all parties are operating with the same information. With this in mind the therapist will ALWAYS encourage open communication between partners. However, information shared in individual sessions WILL NOT be shared in couples work without the consent and agreement. If one partner provides information in an individual session this information will be maintained as confidential by the therapist.

Resolve Counseling Center attempts to be completely transparent regarding confidentiality practices. Questions about practices should be discussed up front, however, with some questions formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex.



#### COMMUNICATION POLICIES:

Phone/Texting: Feel free to leave a message on my confidential voicemail. All phone communications will be returned within 48-business hours of receiving your message. Texts are also welcome and convenient, typically texts will render quicker response than a voice mail message though not immediate. Therapists are typically not immediately available by telephone or text and do not respond to the phone while working with clients. Every effort will be made to return your call /text on the same day it is received, with the exception of weekends and holidays. Therapists are often not available outside of office hours or while meeting with other clients. As a result, in the event of an emergency, please dial 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. You can also go directly to psychiatric emergency departments including the following:

St. Vincent's Stress Center 8401 Harcourt Road Indianapolis, IN 46260 (317) 338-4800

Community Hospital North 7165 Clearvista Way Indianapolis, IN 46256 (317) 621-5100

Please note that voicemails/texts/emails are not fully secure methods of communication nor are they HIPAA compliant. While the therapist does have password protected devices that are responsibly maintained, complete privacy protection and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. These communication methods will be responded to by the therapist but should be used at the client's own risk.

Email: Email is not a fully secure method of communication nor is it HIPAA compliant. If you need to discuss a clinical matter with me, please feel free to call me so we can discuss it on the phone or wait so we can discuss it during your therapy session. Any clinical information sent via email will be addressed during clinical session times. Please note that all communication sent can become a part of your therapy notes.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

In order to maintain client confidentiality, the therapist will not communicate with, accept "friend requests," or accept requests to follow clients on social media platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. If therapist's information is encountered on one of these platforms please discuss this during an appointment time. In addition, if the therapist discovers that an online relationship with a client has inadvertently been established the relationship will be cancelled. This is because casual social contacts can create significant security risks for the client as well as unhealthy relationship confusion. Communications with clients on social media have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship.

#### WEB SEARCHES:

Web searches will not be used to gather information about clients without permission. This can be deemed as a violation of privacy rights; however, it understand that a client might choose to gather information about a therapist in this way. There is a considerable amount of information

available about individuals on the internet, much of which may be known to that person and some which may be unknown or inaccurate. Recently, a trend has emerged for clients to review their health care provider on various websites. Unfortunately, mental health professionals cannot respond to such comments and related errors because of confidentiality restrictions. If the client encounters any information that causes the client to feel uncomfortable or uncertain about the therapist through web searches, or in any other fashion, please discuss this during an appointment time to address it and its potential impact on therapy.

**RECORD KEEPING:**

The laws and standards of the mental health profession require that therapists keep and maintain session notes. These records are kept only as long as is mandated by Indiana state law. If the client has concerns regarding session notes this should be discussed. The client is entitled to receive a copy of the records unless the therapist believes that seeing them would be emotionally damaging, in which case they can be viewed with the therapist or sent to another appropriate mental health professional. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. It is recommended that clients review them in the presence of the therapist and discuss the contents together.

Your signature is an acknowledgment that you have read and understand the aforementioned policies (pages 1-5) and agree to abide by practices stated within.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date