

# **SOTM, INC. COUNSELING SERVICES**

## ***Policies and Procedures***

**Welcome to SOTM, Inc-Supporting Others Through Mentoring Counseling Services.** Please read the following information about your rights and responsibilities and our policies and procedures. If you have any questions after reading this document, please don't hesitate to discuss them with your counselor.

**Intake:** The first interview will be with an intake counselor who will talk with you about your needs and the ways in which the Counseling Services might be able to help. Options may include: individual, couples or group counseling, career counseling, or referral to another office or service provider better suited to your needs. Please note: your intake counselor may not necessarily be the counselor you continue to meet with after intake.

**Intake Procedure** - is usually an hour session to ascertain the needs of the client and find out what type of services they want and need. It is not counted as one of the individual therapy sessions. During the intake session the Counselor needs to explain the following:

1. Process of intake and scheduling the client with the Counselor
2. Counseling has a short-term focus unless there are therapeutic reasons to continue the therapy in which case the client can pay for the services
3. Fee billing information (*if needed*).
4. Limitations of confidentiality
5. Cancellation policy and importance of keeping the appointment
6. Possibility of referral into the community

### **Client Rights**

**Individuals under age 18 who request services should understand that parents/legal guardians have the right to request information from the counselor. Ethical guidelines and applicable laws permit this disclosure of information to parents/legal guardians of minors.**

**Confidentiality:** All interactions with SOTM Counseling Center, including scheduling of, or attendance of appointments, content of your sessions, progress in counseling, and your records, are confidential. Information obtained during counseling or in written form through testing will not be disclosed to anyone without your written permission. Legally, however, we are required to disclose information to:

- protect you or someone else from imminent danger,
- report suspected abuse of children, the elderly, or the disabled,

- report suspected sexual exploitation of a client by a therapist,
- respond to a court subpoena.

All counselors are committed to the ethical standards of practice as set forth by the American Psychological Assoc., American Counseling Assn., and the State of Texas.

**Please Note: The exceptions to confidentiality are extremely rare.** However, if they should occur it is the Center's policy that, whenever possible, we will discuss with you any action that is being considered. Legally we are not obligated to seek your permission, especially if such a discussion would prevent us from securing your safety or the safety of others. If disclosure of confidential information does become necessary, we will release only the information necessary to protect you or another person, or only that which is required by law.

**Respect:** You can expect to be treated with respect by your counselor and the staff of the SOTM. As much as possible, your appointments will begin and end on time. We will attempt to contact you if rescheduling is needed. You can expect your counselor's full attention during sessions. You may ask questions regarding your counselor's training and qualifications. You may ask about the counseling process, or any specific counseling strategies your counselor may suggest. You are encouraged to discuss your progress and review your goals with your counselor. If you feel that you are not making progress toward your goals, you should discuss this directly with your counselor. You have the right to terminate counseling at any time if you so desire, and to request referral to another counselor.

**Good to Know:** Because counseling involves discussing issues that are presenting you with some difficulty, you may find: 1) the energy it takes to focus on your issue(s) makes it harder to concentrate on other things; 2) emotions may be more available to you and you may feel moodier; 3) you may see things in new or different ways and this may be confusing or difficult for a short time; and 4) relationships may be affected as you examine interpersonal issues.

#### **Client Responsibilities:**

**Active Participation:** In order for counseling to be effective, you must take an active role. This involves being honest with your counselor, discussing concerns openly, completing assignments when appropriate, listening to your counselor and providing feedback about the process of counseling.

**Keeping Appointments:** Our ability to provide quality services to the greatest number of clients is dependent on clients keeping their appointments. We expect that you will notify us in advance if you cannot or choose not to keep an appointment. **If you do not keep your appointment and do not call to cancel within 24 hours, or if you cancel two out of three consecutive appointments, we will assume you are no longer interested in our services.** You may return for services at any time, however you will be assigned to a counselor after other clients on our waiting list (if any) have been assigned.

**When appointments are missed without a 24 hour advance cancellation,** persons will be charged the full session fee. Emergencies and/or situations beyond the client's control will be considered case by case.

**Email:** Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as e-mail is not a secure medium. To discuss any personal concerns, please call the counseling center during working hours. Please be aware that our staff does not maintain 24-hour access to e-mail accounts, and may only check e-mail infrequently.

### PRICING GUIDELINES

SOTM is a nonprofit organization and must recover its operating costs to remain viable. Our fees are designed to ensure that we can pay our staff, insurance, rent, and other overhead costs. A small portion of these expenses is defrayed by tax-exempt contributions, but we must rely on fees to cover most of our costs. It is important, therefore, that payment be made at the time services are provided, unless prior arrangements have been made.

### SLIDING FEE SCALE

To keep our services and programs affordable, SOTM utilizes a sliding fee scale based on clients' family income and family size. SOTM charges a reasonable fee that the individual or family is able to pay. The fee is set up during the phone assessment. All fees are due prior to the start of each session unless other payment arrangements have been approved in advance. No one is turned away due to lack of funds. Our fee scale, which reflects our underlying approach to this organization, is designed to enable individuals at all income levels to afford counseling services.

### AVERAGE FEES FOR SERVICE

Individual Counseling	Couples Counseling	Group Counseling
Intake No charge	Intake No charge	Intake No charge
Sessions 1-2 No charge	Sessions 1-2 No charge	Sessions 1-2 No charge

3-12 each session \$15.00	3-12 each session \$20 per couple	Group Screening No charge up to 8 group sessions
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*Our policy is that no client will be denied services due to an inability to pay.*

**Delinquent Accounts:** We ask for fees to be paid on an as-you-go basis or, when that is not possible, that specific arrangements be made with the counselor.

### **Counselor Rights**

#### **Seek Consultation**

To seek consultation with other Counselors. While information will not be released to anyone outside the SOTM without your permission, as professionals, we may confer with each other within the Counseling Center to review therapy plans and progress. You will be informed regarding your counselor's title within the agency and the name of her or his supervisor.

#### **Work as a Team**

The counseling staff works as a team. Your counselor may consult with other counseling staff to provide you with the best possible care. Staff consultations are for professional and training purposes. Information will not be disclosed outside of the SCC without your written consent with the exception of the following:

**REFERRALS:** Therapists reserve the right to suggest to a client to an outside service if issues presented would require long-term counseling and therapy interventions, if the need is outside the scope of SOTM's professional expertise or personal competency; or if there is a break in the protocol or trust between a counselor and client.

#### **Feedback:**

The Counselors and staff are interested in any positive or negative feedback you may have regarding the services you receive. You will have an opportunity to provide feedback at the end of your counseling on our evaluation form. You are, of course, welcome to provide us with feedback at any time during the counseling process. If, for any reason, you are not satisfied with the counseling process, we encourage you to discuss this first with your counselor. You may also request an appointment with the Counseling program Director to discuss possible reassignment or other counseling options or concerns.

If you have any questions about these guidelines please feel free to discuss them with your counselor. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE GUIDELINES FOR SERVICES ON BOTH PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT, AND CONSENT VOLUNTARILY FOR SERVICES DESCRIBED IN THESE GUIDELINES.

*I am aware of my rights and responsibilities as a client.*

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Client \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature*

Client Intake Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

