

CONNECTIONS

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Greetings City Employees and Family Members!

This month we have put together the first of a two part newsletter series on Accessing Mental Health Services for employees and family members in order to demystify, destigmatize, and educate on common questions we receive in the EAP. Though many people access our services, we understand that sometimes people are not ready, or prefer to take their mental health into their own hands. We support you in that. Our job is not to be the experts in all matters of mental health, but to provide direct or indirect support to you and your family if you choose to explore your options.

This newsletter will provide concrete, specific information about practical and oftentimes overwhelming things that keep people from accessing mental health services when they need it. When people feel overwhelmed and feel like they need help, the brain and body want predictability and to feel better. Counseling can help some people feel better and gain more control over their life, however, for many people, not knowing where to start or what counseling might look like can be just enough “unpredictability” to keep them from reaching out in the first place. We don’t want that to be a barrier to you. In this newsletter, we will address things like:

- How do I find a counselor through my health plan? What number do I call? What should I say? What do they pay for?
- What are the different styles of counseling I can access?
- What do the different mental health credentials mean? Is there a difference between a counselor, therapist, or psychologist?
- What are my rights around confidentiality and legal protection of my health and mental health information?
- What can I expect if I call the EAP?

Stay tuned for next month’s newsletter which will compliment February’s Connections by delving more into different types of counseling. We will address more specific issues that bring people to counseling, such as wanting to address current or past trauma, relationship difficulties, or the use of drugs, prescription medications, or alcohol. Taking care of ourselves is a skill that needs to be built and maintained throughout one’s life. We hope that this information will be a beneficial guide to help support the mental health of yourself or someone you know.

~ The EAP Team

Therapy

Mental Health America
(Used with the author’s permission)

People with mental health conditions often find psychotherapy—or “talk therapy”—very helpful. The type and length of your therapy will depend on your personal situation and insurance, and your therapy may be part of an overall treatment plan that includes medication or other treatment options.

Talking with a therapist or counselor can help you deal with thoughts, behaviors, symptoms, stresses, goals, past experiences and other areas that can promote your recovery. Of course, talking with a therapist about personal issues can be tough, but it can help you come to grips with problems in your life. It can also offer an emotional release and a sense of really being heard, understood and supported.

Therapy can help you to:

- feel stronger in the face of challenges
- change behaviors that hold you back
- look at ways of thinking that affect how you feel
- heal pains from the past
- build relationship skills
- figure out your goals
- strengthen your self-confidence
- cope with symptoms
- handle strong emotions like fear, grief or anger
- enhance your problem solving skills



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Types of Therapy

There are many different types of therapy, including those that are most effective with families or groups of people. You can learn about your options by talking with people you trust, like your family doctor or clergy, with people who have experience with mental health conditions, or with staff at your local [Mental Health America affiliate](#).

You might ask therapists you're considering if they use a particular type of therapy and how it works. You may get more out of therapy if you understand how the process usually works and how the therapist thinks it will help you. Some therapists will blend a few different approaches together to suit your particular needs.

The following are a few common types of therapy:

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** has two main aspects. The cognitive part works to develop helpful beliefs about your life. The behavioral side helps you learn to take healthier actions. CBT often works well for depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, but it can also be used for other various conditions.
- **Interpersonal therapy** focuses largely on improving relationships and helping a person express emotions in healthy ways. This approach often works well for depression. A variation of it called "interpersonal and social rhythm therapy" often works well for bipolar disorder because it also helps develop a daily schedule that supports recovery.
- **Family therapy** helps family members communicate, handle conflicts and solve problems better. Forms of family therapy often are used for treating eating disorders and bipolar disorder.
- **Psychodynamic therapy** helps people develop a better understanding about their unconscious emotions and motivations that can affect their thoughts and actions.
- **Art therapy** can include using music, dance, drawing and other art forms to help express emotions and promote healing.
- **Psychoeducation** helps people understand mental health conditions and ways to promote recovery.

For more information on types of therapy visit the [National Institute of Mental Health website](#).

In addition to different types of therapy, each therapist has different amounts and types of training. For example, a psychiatrist is trained in therapy but also has a medical degree and can prescribe medication. A pastoral counselor will include a religious or spiritual approach to treatment. Other therapists may be trained to deal with substance use issues.



What to Expect

Depending on your situation, therapy can be fairly short or longer-term. Often, people see their therapists once a week for 50 minutes. Your first session will be different from future visits. The initial visit is more of a "getting to know you" session and will help your therapist get an idea of how to proceed with your treatment.

You have a right to feel safe and respected in therapy. If you're concerned, you can ask about confidentiality. Usually, though, it's understood that a therapist respects your privacy; and that group members do too, if you're meeting in a group. Therapy should address your needs, goals, concerns and desires. If you're going to be talking to someone about your most personal thoughts, you want to feel comfortable.

You can think about what traits might make you feel more comfortable with a therapist. For example, would you prefer to see:

- a preferred gender
- someone older or younger
- someone from your cultural background
- someone with a style that's more formal or friendly

Get additional information about [therapy](#) at Psych Central.

Therapy may not help you immediately. Over time, though, it can help you develop more coping skills, stronger relationships and a better sense of yourself.

Getting the Most Out of Therapy

Therapy likely will work best if there is a partnership between you and the therapist. Don't just sit there! Take an active part in your sessions. **You can strengthen your therapy in many ways.**

- **Tell your provider your goals for treatment.** Think about whether there are certain behaviors or issues you care about most.
- **Keep an open mind.** Be willing to consider new ways of behaving and thinking that might improve the quality of your life. We all resist change, so don't be surprised if you are tempted to quit right before some real changes happen.
- **If you think you're not making progress,** you should tell your provider. A good therapist will want to work with you so you can get the most out of your sessions. After discussing your concerns, if you're still not comfortable, you might consider meeting with another therapist for advice and possibly switching.
- **Be open and honest.** Your therapist can't really help you if you don't share the whole picture. Don't say you're fine if you're not.
- **Take your therapy home.** You might consider keeping a journal or other ways to focus on what you've been discussing in therapy. Think about ways to use ideas from therapy in your daily life.

If you are experiencing a mental health issue, EAP counselors are available to talk through your options and next steps. Just call 266-6561 to schedule an in-person or phone consultation. If you or someone you are calling about is experiencing extreme distress or is possibly suicidal, you can call the suicide prevention lifeline at 1-800-273-8255, or if you are afraid for the imminent life, safety, or psychiatric state of yourself or someone you are calling about, contact 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

Therapist Credentials

What do they actually mean?

There are many routes to become a Mental Health counselor/therapist. Below is a brief explanation of the most common different types of degrees and licensure:

Master's Degree

- These individuals can diagnose and offer counseling but they do not prescribe medication. They typically work with a psychiatrist for medication management.
- Credentials can include:
 - » MA (Masters of Arts) or MS (Masters of Science) in a psychology field such as counseling psychology or clinical psychology
 - » LCSW: Licensed Clinical Social Worker (is fully licensed to independently practice clinically, meaning diagnosing and counseling)
 - » LMFT: Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
 - » LPC: Licensed Professional Counselor

Doctoral Degree

- Psychologist can have a masters level but also a doctoral level of education.
- Psychologist with Doctoral level will also have a "Dr." before their name.
- These individuals can provide counseling, typically will focus on specific forms of assessment, and can also focus on teaching.
- Credentials can include:
 - » PhD: Doctor of Philosophy
 - » PsyD: Doctor of Psychology
 - » EdD: Doctoral in Education

Psychiatrist

- Has gone to medical school so they will have "Dr." before their name.
- Can prescribe medication.
- Credentials:
 - » MD

Other things to know

- This is not a comprehensive list.
- In addition to these fully licensed providers, there are credentials for providers who are in training but still being supervised.
- There are also specialized certifications that individuals may add to their license based on receiving specialized training such as:
 - » Substance abuse training which includes the credentials SAC (Substance Abuse Counselor).
- Individuals can also receive specialized training that can result in treating specialized problems such as trauma.

5 Things Therapists Wish Everyone Knew About Mental Health

By Amy Morin, [Psychology Today](#) (Used with the author's permission)

It's time to clear up the misconceptions about mental health.

Most people who walk into my therapy office tell me that they had thought about getting help for years. But they were afraid to reach out to a therapist. And that's understandable. There are a lot of misconceptions about mental health, and not enough people are talking about it. While the stigma surrounding mental health issues is starting to slowly go away, we have a long way to go before mental health is treated like physical health. Here are five things therapists wish everyone knew about mental health:

1. Mental health is a continuum.

People don't talk about physical health in broad terms like they do mental health. For example, no one would say, "She's physically ill," when describing someone who might have anything from seasonal allergies to a terminal diagnosis. That wouldn't make sense. But that's what often happens with mental illness. People say things like, "My neighbor is mentally ill," when describing a variety of behaviors (quite often it has a derogatory connotation).

Many people also talk about mental health in an all-or-nothing fashion. They say things like, "I've never had a mental health problem." But the truth is your mental health changes every day. Think of it more like a continuum, and on any given day, you might fall in a different spot on the continuum depending on what's going on in your life. Everyone experiences mental health issues to some degree.

2. Anyone can develop a mental illness.

Many people believe they should be immune to mental illness. They think they're too smart, too well-educated, have too much money, or too few problems to experience depression, anxiety, or some other mental illness. But the truth is, anyone can develop a mental health problem at any age. And while you can control some of the factors that influence your mental health—like taking care of yourself—you can't control genetics, and you can't prevent some of the life experiences that may trigger a mental health issue.

3. Mental strength is different than mental health.

Some people view mental illness as weakness. But there's a big difference between mental strength and mental health. It's similar to the way physical strength and physical health are different. Lifting weights helps you become stronger, and working out may prevent some physical illnesses. But big muscles don't guarantee you won't get cancer or have a heart attack. Mental muscle is similar. Developing mental strength can help you stay healthy, and it can prevent some mental illnesses. But it doesn't make you permanently immune to an anxiety or bipolar disorder.

4. There are many ways to get help.

Sometimes people avoid asking for help, because they're afraid they'll have to take medication, or they worry a therapist will force them to talk about their childhood. But ultimately, you're in control of your treatment. You don't have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about. You don't have to take medication, even if it's suggested by a physician. If you and your therapist aren't a good match, you can get a new therapist. You can even try online therapy if you don't want to go to a therapist's office. Most online therapists allow you to remain anonymous, and you can connect with a mental health provider at your convenience via message, live chat, or video sessions.

5. Mental illnesses are treatable.

If you're experiencing a mental health issue, there's a good chance you've been trying to manage your symptoms on your own. Perhaps you're even self-medicating with some unhealthy habits, like eating too much, drinking, using drugs, or even binge-watching Netflix to escape reality. But there are more effective ways to manage mental health problems. Mental illnesses are very treatable. Treatment recommendations often include medication, talk therapy, or a combination of both.

How to Find Help When You Want It

If you think you might want to talk to someone about an issue in your life—whether you're having a relationship problem or you're struggling to manage stress—you might start by talking to your physician. Your doctor can help you find a therapist.

If you decide to go the online therapy route, most sites will match you with a therapist within a few hours, so you can start talking to someone about your concerns.

To find a therapist near you, visit the [Psychology Today Therapy Directory](#).

Amy Morin is a licensed clinical social worker, psychotherapist, college psychology instructor and internationally recognized expert on mental strength. She's a Wall Street Journal and international bestselling author of [13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do](#) and [13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do](#).

Finding **MENTAL HEALTH CARE** that Fits Your **CULTURAL BACKGROUND**



What is Cultural Background?

Culture is a particular group's beliefs, customs, values and way of thinking, behaving and communicating. Cultural background affects how someone:

- Views mental health conditions
- Describes symptoms
- Communicates with health care providers such as doctors and mental health professionals
- Receives and responds to treatment

What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is the behaviors, attitudes and skills that allow a health care provider to work effectively with different cultural groups. Finding culturally competent providers is important because they understand the essential role that culture plays in life and health. A culturally competent provider includes cultural beliefs, values, practices and attitudes in your care to meet your unique needs.

Tips for Finding a Culturally Competent Provider

Research Providers

- Contact providers or agencies from your same cultural background or look for providers and agencies that have worked with people who have a similar cultural background.
- Ask trusted friends and family for recommendations.
- Look online or ask for referrals from cultural organizations in your community.
- If you have health insurance, ask the health plan for providers that fit your cultural background.



Ask Providers These Questions

- Are you familiar with my community's beliefs, values and attitudes toward mental health? If not, are you willing to learn about my cultural background and respect my perspective?
- Do you have experience treating people from my cultural background?
- Have you had cultural competence training?
- Are you or members of your staff bilingual?
- How would you include aspects of my cultural identity, such as age, faith, gender identity or sexual orientation, in my care?



Other Things You Can Do

- Tell the provider about traditions, values and beliefs that are important to you.
- Tell the provider what role you want your family to play in your treatment.
- Learn about your condition, particularly how it affects people from your culture or community.
- Look around the provider's office for signs of inclusion. Who works there? Does the waiting room have magazines, signs and pamphlets for you and your community?



Your Health Plan's Mental Health Coverage

The following information is accurate as of January 2020. Always consult your insurance company to ensure that the mental health provider you have selected will be covered, even if the clinic tells you that they are a covered provider.

Finances are often a question and sometimes a barrier to accessing mental health services. All City health plans through the Employee Trust Fund (ETF) have a \$500 individual/\$1000 family deductible. What this means is that once the member accessing services pays their full deductible for that year, eligible health and mental health services are 100% covered for the remainder of the plan year as long as you are using an approved provider conducting approved services.

According to federal law, health plans have to cover mental health services the same way that they cover physical health services and will be applied to your deductible like charges for any other qualified medical condition. If you have already met your deductible, you should not see a bill for your mental health services.

ETF has a Department of Ombudspersons Services to help you if you feel there is something that is incorrect about your bill. If you have questions, concerns, or disputes about your benefits, contact your insurance provider first and if that doesn't resolve the issue call 1-877-533-5020 (use 5-digit code 17947) or email ombudsperson@etf.wi.gov.

If you would like help navigating this process or feel you need an appointment sooner than the clinic is able to schedule you, you can call your EAP for assistance.



Dean Health Plan

How to contact

1-800-279-1301 Customer Service for Employer Group Plans
www.deancare.com

Hours of operation

Monday – Friday, 8 am-5 pm

Who answers the phone?

A customer service representative.

What should I tell them/what will they ask me?

State that you are looking for a mental health provider. It may help to specify if you have AODA issues, depression, etc. or if you are looking for a psychiatrist or “talk therapy.” Dean’s mental health services fall under the umbrella of Behavioral Health.

What will they provide me?

Basic referral services. If you have access to a computer, a customer service representative may direct you to Dean’s web site and assist you in looking for a provider based on your health plan and location.

Can I do this process online?

There is a provider search option online. You can search for a provider or clinic on your own, or call a Dean customer service representative to help walk you through that process.

Is there anything unique about this network that would be helpful to know?

Dean has one intake line for all services so the customer service representative who answers your call may not be an expert on all of your Behavioral Health options. If you aren't sure what to ask for, feel free to call and consult with an EAP counselor about what terminology to use on the call.

Group Health Cooperative (GHC)

How to contact

608-441-3290 GHC Mental Health Services Line
www.ghcscw.com

Hours of operation

Monday – Tuesday, 8 am-7 pm
 Wednesday – Friday, 8 am-5 pm

Who answers the phone?

Reception Team staff. Caller will be asked a couple of screening questions and then that information is sent to the mental health coordinators. Expect a call back within 1-2 weeks offering an appointment with a counselor or a psychiatrist. Other options will be provided if the need is more urgent, such as a referral to an affiliate GHC covered clinic, or in some cases an emergency appointment may be offered.

What should I tell them/what will they ask me?

The Reception Team staff person will ask you to explain why you need an appointment, whether you have a gender preference for your counselor/psychiatrist, or a clinic preference. You will also be asked for the best time for a coordinator to call you back. The coordinator will call you back in 1-2 weeks and may need a few more details to find the best fit for you.

Can I do this process online?

You can look at a general provider list online, but you cannot access GHC's Mental Health Services Line on the web. Referral recommendation by a mental health coordinator will be provided over the phone.

Is there anything unique about this network that would be helpful to know?

You have the option of going to an affiliate GHC provider with prior authorization. GHC asks that once you get an appointment with an affiliate GHC provider, call the Group Health Cooperative Mental Health Services number right away at 608-441-3290 and they will submit the request for prior authorization.

Quartz

How to contact

608-640-4450 or 1-800-683-2300 Behavioral Health Care Management Line
www.quartzbenefits.com

Hours of operation

Monday – Friday, 8 am-5 pm

Who answers the phone?

Care Coordinators for Quartz Behavioral Health Services.

What should I tell them/what will they ask me?

If you need help finding a provider they may ask you additional information on what kind of issue you would like assistance with to better match you (such as substance use). There is no need to go into extensive detail.

What will they provide me?

Based on the criteria requested by the caller, care coordinators will provide a list of counselors/agencies over the phone that the caller can contact within their approved insurance plan.

Can I do this process online?

Yes, if you visit the [website](#) you can find a list on in-network providers. You can call a provider directly to schedule an outpatient appointment.

Is there anything unique about this network that would be helpful to know?

Depending on your plan, you may be able to see someone out of your network but prior approval is needed for this and it will result in higher co-payments.



What to Expect When You Call the EAP

Internal EAP



How to contact

608-266-6561
cityofmadison.com/employee-assistance-program

Hours of operation

Monday – Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm

Who answers the phone?

If an employee or family member were to call our internal EAP office, in most cases they will first speak with a confidential program assistant. At times a counselor may answer the phone, but in all cases the person answering the phone will be a confidential member of our internal EAP staff.

What should I tell them/what will they ask me?

EAP staff will collect basic information from you (name, department, phone number) and work with you to determine how we can best support you. Examples of how we might assist include:

- Scheduling you to meet with an internal counselor. This may be on site at our EAP office, or counselors can travel to you if you are unable to come to our office.
- Having a counselor speak with you over the phone for a brief or extended phone consult.
- Referring you to an affiliate counselor in the community that is covered by the EAP.
- Referring you to an outside counselor or agency through your insurance.
- Providing you with resources that may help address the issue for which you are requesting assistance.

Can I do this process online?

No, the internal EAP does not have an online intake system in place. It is possible to email the EAP at eap@cityofmadison.com in order to request resources or an appointment.

Who can use City of Madison internal EAP Services? Internal EAP services are available to City employees whether they are full-time, part-time, hourly, seasonal, or interns and to City of Madison retirees. Internal EAP services are also available to your eligible family members or dependents. An eligible family member includes your immediate family members, meaning your spouse or non-marital partner, as well as children who are dependent on you for support. If you have questions about whether or not someone qualifies for the EAP benefit, call our internal EAP office to confirm.

External EAP



How to contact

1-800-236-7905 FEI Workforce Resilience
feieap.com

Hours of operation

24/7 intake counselor coverage

Who answers the phone?

Master's level FEI EAP counselors/clinical case managers answer the phone Monday – Friday, 8 am-5:30 pm. After business hours, or if they are unavailable, a Master's level EAP counselor from FEI's call center will answer the phone. FEI EAP is not an emergency call center, but it is standard practice for intake counselors to assess for safety for each online contact or telephone call.

What should I tell them/what will they ask me?

The EAP counselor who answers the phone will complete a 10-15 minute confidential intake with you, which includes information like where you work, what you are calling about, and how a counselor can best assist you. If you call during normal business hours, an FEI counselor will provide brief support if needed, and at the end of the conversation you will receive a referral name and contact number for an EAP affiliate counselor for you to see in your area. If you spoke after hours with a member of FEI's call center, you will receive a call back with the referral name and number within one business day.

Can I do this process online?

Yes, complete the confidential FEI Intake Form online at feieapintake.com and receive a call back from an FEI EAP counselor within one business day. During this call, the EAP counselor will provide you with a local EAP affiliate counselor for you to see. The online intake form may also be accessed from the FEI web page at feieap.com. The user name is *Madison*.



Who can use the City's external EAP?

FEI EAP is available to City employees whether they are full-time, part-time, hourly, seasonal, or interns. FEI counselors and affiliates are also available to employees' eligible family members or dependents. An eligible family member includes your immediate family members, meaning your spouse or non-marital partner, as well as children who are dependent on you for support. If you have questions about whether or not someone qualifies for the EAP benefit, call our internal EAP office to confirm. Referrals through the employee's health plan will only cover family members on that policy.

EAP Questions & Answers

Do I need to wait months before I get an appointment?

A concern some people have is the wait time to see a provider. Some counselors and psychiatrists can schedule out as far as 2-3 months, however, that is not a general rule. Many people stop the process of scheduling an appointment because the wait time can be far too long, but they don't realize that there may be other options, clinics, and providers. It can take longer to be seen by a psychiatrist because there are fewer psychiatrists than counselors, though there are exceptions to this, so inquire. Counselors can have long wait times, but some are able to see clients within a week or two. A benefit of the EAP is that we can assist you in your search for a counselor, sometimes expediting that process. We can also provide you with free short-term counseling to help you with any immediate concerns while you wait for your initial appointment with an outside clinic.

Can I attend counseling on work time?

You may use EAP services on work time and be compensated for it. In order to do this, you must inform your direct supervisor of the date and time you will be going to the EAP if you have a work position where you need to be held accountable for your whereabouts. You do not need to inform anyone at work, including your supervisor, of the topic or content of your session(s) with the EAP. You can also attend EAP off work hours and not be compensated for it if you do not wish to disclose to your supervisor that you will be using EAP services.

Counseling that takes place outside of the City of Madison's EAP is not compensated as work time. This will be treated like any other personal appointment which requires proper notice of your absence and the use of benefit time to cover your time away from work. If you require counseling or other mental health supportive services which need to take place on work time, you may also inquire with your supervisor and Human Resources to see if you qualify for a protected leave of absence, accommodations, or flexing your schedule.

What if I don't like my counselor?

No worries! This happens sometimes, and most counselors should have received the training to be able to discuss this with you. Much like there are endless topics, personalities, histories, and preferences that clients can bring to the counseling office, there are also a great many styles, personalities, areas of expertise, and treatment modalities that counselors can have. This is to your benefit. Some people want to talk to someone with a vastly different perspective than their own, and some want someone more familiar. Sometimes a counselor and a client simply aren't the right fit, and sometimes you don't know that until you try it out. It is encouraged to discuss this with your counselor if you feel comfortable, because they may be able to make adjustments to their services, or help you find a counselor who may be a better fit. Counseling can sometimes touch "nerves" that bring about discomforts, and you may find yourself not liking something about your counselor. Counselors are trained to explore this with you and help you determine if you would like to seek counseling elsewhere, or if you would like to explore that discomfort as part of the counseling session.

Will my workplace find out if I am in counseling?

Due to HIPAA laws, your mental health professional cannot legally disclose any information to your workplace, which includes that you are accessing their services, what you say in session, and if you discontinue services. To learn more about HIPAA laws and regulations, ask your counseling clinic about any concerns you may have before, during, or after you are engaged in therapy, or read more about it here: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/privacysummary.pdf>

What is the difference between counseling and psychotherapy?

Most people use the terms counseling/counselor and psychotherapy/psychotherapist or therapy/therapist interchangeably. Some may distinguish counseling as a broader term, and some identify psychotherapy as being more clinical in nature, however in the laws and regulations there really is no significant difference. In the EAP, we identify as being counselors because we do not diagnose or treat mental health diagnoses, but we assess for them and refer to counselors/therapists who can clinically assess, diagnose, and treat a mental health disorder.



What are my rights as a client?

When you start counseling in a clinical mental health counseling center or with a licensed mental health provider, you should be informed of your rights as a patient ahead of time by the therapist or during the clinic's intake process. The therapist should, in addition, give you a printed or electronic copy of your rights, so that you can take it home with you. You can read more about your rights here: <https://psychcentral.com/blog/your-patient-rights-in-therapy>

What information is protected?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that protects your health and mental health information from being disclosed without your consent or knowledge. When you go to a state licensed mental health facility or see a licensed mental health provider, your health and mental health information is legally protected information, just like when you go to the doctor's office. This includes your name and birthdate, any information that could lead someone to identify who you are, what you discuss, and whether or not you are or have ever been a client of that clinic. To learn more about your rights under HIPAA: hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/guidance-materials-for-consumers

When a client visits the internal EAP, we provide them with information on their confidentiality rights. EAP will not disclose what you discuss with EAP staff without your written consent except within limits as governed by Federal and State laws. Any information **related to the following areas** may be released, without your authorization, to appropriate persons, e.g., a crisis intervention worker, law enforcement personnel, therapist or doctor, etc.:

- An unexplained, unusual, or suspicious death
- A case of suspected abuse or suspected neglect of a child, dependent adult, elder or disabled person
- A threat to inflict bodily harm to yourself or to another person
- A threat to commit or a report of committing a serious crime
- A threat to public health and safety

People often wonder if they can discuss things like suicide, self-harm, domestic violence, or substance abuse, out of fear that we will need to report them or the person they are talking about. Unless we assess that there is an imminent and serious threat of life or safety for you or the person you are talking about, we will continue to work with you confidentially and to assist you on getting the help you may need on your terms. When we are required to disclose information to provide you or the person you are concerned about with immediate medical or mental health assistance, we only disclose the minimum of what is required to assure safety, and only to those who are required to hear it.



6 Myths about Counseling

Myth #1: Counseling is for "crazy", "weak," or severely mentally ill people.

Reality: Many people who seek counseling are skilled, stable people. Most individuals seek counseling for everyday issues including stress, symptoms of depression, relationship issues, and seeking personal growth.

Myth #2: Therapists don't know me and won't be able to help me.

Reality: On the contrary, this is the very reason why counseling works! Because a counselor is not part of your everyday life, it allows for a unique relationship where you can be honest and your therapist can be impartial.

Myth #3: Everyone will know I am seeing a therapist.

Reality: Counselors are bound by professional ethics and state law to protect your privacy and confidentiality during and after treatment. If this is broken it can lead them to losing their license to practice. The only exceptions to this rule is in cases of imminent danger, when a judge mandates the release of records, or if you sign a release of information detailing what information your counselor can disclose, when, and to whom. See "EAP Questions & Answers" in this newsletter for more information. Unless you tell people, no one will know.

Myth #4: Couples therapy is for couples that are about to break up or get divorced.

Reality: Although people can seek help when their relationship is going through a rough patch, counseling can be used as a preventative strategy to work on mild problems, or to improve communication, marital happiness, satisfaction, or intimacy.

Myth #5: Counselors will try to put you on medication

Reality: Licensed counselors will either hold a Masters or Doctoral degree in a mental health field. They provide appropriate counseling services and cannot prescribe medication. Only psychiatrists, a medical doctor, or a psychiatric mental health nurse can prescribe medication. Your counselor can work alongside one of these professionals if medications are determined to be needed.

Myth #6: Counseling is a quick solution to my problem.

Reality: There are no quick fixes when it comes to mental health. Counseling is a proactive way to facilitate change; it takes patience, practice, and persistence. Counseling can teach you skills to handle difficult times, learn ways to improve your decision making process, learn more about yourself and your patterns, improve specific areas of your life, and address and improve your overall wellness.

*Thanks for reading,
we hope you found the information useful!*

**You can reach any of us by calling the
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