

# **BASTYR UNIVERSITY** *California*

## **Counseling Contract**

Welcome to Bastyr University Clinic (BUC), San Diego. This document contains important information about professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and discuss any questions you have during the initial meeting. By signing this document, it represents an agreement between you and your BUC counselor.

### **Counseling Services**

Counseling is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the counselor and client, and the particular problems brought forward. There are many different methods that may be used to deal with the problems you hope to address. Counseling calls for a very active effort on your part. The extent to which you are open and honest about yourself will play a role in how effectively you and your counselor can work together to achieve your goals.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Since counseling often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Counseling often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

The first session will involve an evaluation of your needs. After the evaluation, your BUC counselor will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your therapeutic work will include and a treatment plan to follow. If you have questions about the procedures, it should be discussed whenever they arise.

### **General Counseling Guidelines**

It is very important to consistently attend scheduled counseling sessions. Please be aware that your absences may negatively influence the progress of your counseling. Please consider finding a day and time when you can meet routinely.

The relationship with a counselor is very special and unique. You will be sharing information that may be sensitive and intimate. It is your counselor's job to not make judgments or give advice. Rather, their role is to help you understand factors that contribute to your current difficulty and to assist you in finding the best course of action considering your beliefs, culture, lifestyle, and particular circumstances. With time, you may come to feel close to your counselor and may wish to spend time together in a more social environment. However, to protect your confidentiality and maintain professionalism, BUC counselors do not socialize or engage in a business relationship with clients and are unable to accept invitations to events or celebrations. In counseling, the focus is always on you. At first this may seem a little awkward; you may not be used to talking about yourself to someone who doesn't tell you much about themselves in return. After a while this uneasiness usually goes away. You are encouraged to be honest about your feelings, not only about others, but also about your counselor and your work together. This is the best and safest way to cultivate a stronger sense of self and an effective working relationship.

If at any point during counseling it is determined that your BUC counselor is not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, you will be given a number of referrals that may be of help to you. You also have the right to terminate counseling at any time without any financial, legal, or moral obligations other than those you have already incurred. If either party decides to

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terminate counseling, it is recommended you meet for at least one session to review your work together, goals and accomplishments, any further work to be done, and treatment options. This process is intended to facilitate a positive termination experience and give both parties the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been done.

### **Meetings**

Our clinic is suited to provide short-term treatment (typically no more than 12 sessions). Please note that counseling sessions are only available during the Spring and Summer Quarters. Sessions are 45 minutes in length and generally meetings will be once per week. Please make an effort to arrive on time to your appointment. If you are late to an appointment, you will be provided services for the remainder of the scheduled time and will be responsible for the fee of the full session. We understand that some things are out of your control; if you know you will be late, please call ahead.

### **Benefits and Risks of Telemental Health**

Receiving services via telemental health allows you to: Receive services at times or in places where the service may not otherwise be available. Receive services in a fashion that may be more convenient and less prone to delays than in-person meetings. Receive services when you are unable to travel to the service provider's office. The unique characteristics of telemental health media may also help some people make improved progress on health goals that may not have been otherwise achievable without telemental health.

Receiving services via telemental health has the following risks: Telemental health services can be impacted by technical failures, may introduce risks to your privacy, and may reduce your service provider's ability to directly intervene in crises or emergencies. Here is a non-exhaustive list of examples: Internet connections could cease working or become too unstable to use.

"Hackers" may have the ability to access your private information that is transmitted or stored in the process of telemental health-based service delivery. Computer or smartphone hardware can have sudden failures or run out of power, or local power services can go out. Interruptions may disrupt services at important moments, and your provider may be unable to reach you quickly or using the most effective tools. Your provider may also be unable to help you in-person. There may be additional benefits and risks to telemental health services that arise from the lack of in-person contact or presence, the distance between you and your provider at the time of service, and the technological tools used to deliver services. Your provider will assess these potential benefits and risks, sometimes in collaboration with you, as your relationship progresses.

### **Professional Fees**

BUC counseling fee is \$25 per session. Payment is expected at the time of your appointment and payment will be exchanged with front office staff. We are unable to bill insurance for your counseling sessions.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum 24-hour notice is required to reschedule or cancel an appointment. \$40 will be charged for missed sessions or cancellations with less than 24-hour notice.

### **Contacting Us**

Your BUC counselor is often not immediately available by telephone. Contacting BUC front desk staff or sending your counselor a message via EPIC is typically the best way to reach them.

### **Emergency Procedure**

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If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, such as suicidal thoughts or a medical emergency, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis you can contact the San Diego Access and Crisis Line at 888-724-7240 (counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

### **Social Media**

Your BUC counselor will not communicate with, contact, or accept any friend/contact/fan requests with any clients through social media platforms. If it is discovered that your counselor has accidentally established an online relationship with you, they will cancel that relationship. This is because these types of casual social contacts can create significant privacy risks for you. You may find BUC Clinic or your counselor on sites for users to rate their providers and add reviews. If you should find BUC Clinic or your counselor listed on any of these sites, please know that the listing is *not* a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as a client. If you choose to post an online review about BUC Clinic or your counselor either while you are in treatment or afterwards, please keep in mind that you may be revealing confidential information about your treatment.

None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in counseling wherever and with whomever you like.

### **Professional Records**

The laws and standards of the counseling profession require that treatment records be kept. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records unless there is concern that seeing them would be life-threatening, in which case your counselor can send them or a summary to a mental health professional of your choice. In some cases, your counselor may choose to provide you with a summary of the records. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted by and/or upsetting to readers. If you wish to see your records, it is recommended that you review them in the presence of your counselor so that the contents can be discussed. If you believe that the information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend that information. Should you request a copy of your records or request a change to your information, such a request must be made in writing.

### **Team Care & Supervision**

As the teaching clinic of Bastyr University California, we offer a Team Care approach in which students and supervisors collaborate on how to best meet the needs of the clients seen at the clinic. You will meet with an unlicensed student clinician who is under the supervision of a licensed mental health professional. Supervisors and other student clinicians may observe all or part of your session via live audio and video feed. Counselors may briefly step out of session to receive feedback from their supervisor halfway through session. As part of their supervision, counselors are required to discuss their clinical work with clients with their supervisor.

Supervision is provided in a group setting and other student clinicians are present. Supervisors have access to all treatment records in order to perform supervision responsibilities.

Additionally, due to shared charting in EPIC, other healthcare professionals at BUC may have access to your mental health records.

### **Confidentiality**

In general, any information related to treatment including communication between counselor and client is considered confidential. Your counselor cannot release your information or confirm you are a client without your written permission. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep your information confidential. If your counselor sees you in public, they will not acknowledge they

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have a relationship with you unless you approach them first to maintain your confidentiality. There are a few legal exceptions to confidentiality:

1. If there is reasonable suspicion of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect, counselors are required to make a report to child welfare services and/or notify law enforcement. This includes child pornography or a child as the perpetrator of abuse.
2. If there is reasonable suspicion of elder or dependent adult abuse, counselors are required to make a report to the appropriate agency (such as adult protective services and/or law enforcement).
3. If you are considered a danger to yourself or unable to take care of yourself (gravely disabled), counselors may be required to contact the appropriate authorities, seek appropriate hospitalization, and/or take other steps such as contacting your emergency contact.
4. If you are considered a danger to someone else, counselors may be required to take protective actions, such as notifying the potential victim, notifying law enforcement, and/or seeking appropriate hospitalization.
5. If the patient is involved in any legal proceeding, there is always a chance the records could be subpoenaed and with a valid court order a counselor may have to provide information.

**Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Counselor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date