



The Counseling Center

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Client Handbook

Please let us know if you need help reading, translating, or understanding this handbook.

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Description of Services

Services are provided on an outpatient basis and are designed to meet our clients' individualized treatment needs through consultation, collaboration and coordination of care that respects their strengths and differences. These services are provided to all who are eligible and appropriate for the outpatient level of care. Referrals are accepted from individuals interested in services and from third parties; we are able to bill most insurance plans for payment.

We serve people of all ages at the clinic and in some off-site locations and schedule regular appointments based upon medical necessity criteria. Services are designed and implemented to support the recovery, health and well-being of people and/or their families; enhance quality of life; reduce symptoms and needs; build resilience; restore or improve functioning; and support any applicable integrations back into the community. Each person will have a designated staff member responsible for the coordination of their treatment, which is guided by agreed upon goals.

Our experienced team of providers offers services in a manner that ensures that individuals and their families/guardians, other care providers, and advocates are active collaborators in the process of recovery, growth, and change. Personal well-being, including health and safety, and the provision of highly effective care are our top priorities. Services include, but are not necessarily limited to: diagnostic assessments; psychiatric assessments; individual, family, and group psychotherapy; limited case management; psychoeducation; psychiatric medication management; referrals to other services; and aftercare planning.

Hours and Days of Operation

- Regular hours of operation are Monday through Friday: 8AM – 5PM
- The office is closed on weekends and twelve holidays annually: New Year’s Day, MLK Day, President’s Day, Patriot’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran’s Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day After Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Fee Schedule

Fees for common service types are listed below. These are the rates charged to insurance companies and clients paying privately. Additional service types, at varying rates, are also provided. Information about other service types may be requested at reception.

Procedure Name	Rate
Psychiatry Assessment	\$250.00
Medication Visit, High Complexity	\$200.00
Medication Visit, Mod. Complexity	\$150.00
Medication Visit, Low Complexity	\$125.00

Procedure Name	Rate
Therapy Assessment	\$200.00
Therapy Visit (individual, family, couples)	\$125.00
Group Therapy	\$40.00

Policies

Attendance and Discharge

- 24-hour notice is required for all appointment cancellations; less notice will be considered a ‘no-show’ for that appointment.
- Repeated no-shows, excessive cancellations, lack of responsiveness to outreach, excessive gaps of time between scheduled sessions, or any other scenario resulting in a session success rate of 80% may result in termination from all services at the clinic.
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment time to allow for adequate time to check in, complete required paperwork, etc.
- Any lateness for a scheduled appointment may result in us not being able to see the person, based on the provider’s discretion of best practice in that situation. Anyone arriving more than halfway through their scheduled appointment time period will be considered a no-show and need to reschedule for another time period.

Treatment Team Approach

Our office uses a collaborative, multi-disciplinary clinical model to ensure that the care you receive is comprehensive and highly effective. We make extensive use of supervision, referral, and both internal and external care coordination with your providers and other stakeholders. You can have confidence, therefore, that our treatment recommendations are based on a larger body of knowledge and experience than the opinion of any standalone provider. This also means that we do not provide medication-only or therapy-only services to our clients unless their individual needs dictate it is medically necessary to do so.

Prescription Medication

Please note that medications might not be prescribed at the initial visit with a staff prescriber and that, throughout your course of treatment, decisions related to prescribing medication will be made at the discretion of the provider, in keeping with their clinical judgment. Our prescribing guidelines are based on best practices as established by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other regulatory bodies.

In general, medications are only prescribed to clients as part of a scheduled appointment with a provider. On the occasions where a prescription refill is necessary, have your pharmacy submit an electronic refill request to our office and provide two business days for the request to be fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest

We will inform you of any actual or perceived conflict of interest and written notification of the conflict of interest will be given to you as needed/applicable.

Controlled Substances

Everyone prescribed a controlled substance by a psychiatric provider will be asked to adhere to a Controlled Substances Agreement. This is a requirement in order to ensure that the expectations around controlled substances are clearly understood. At no time will lost or stolen prescriptions for controlled substances be replaced, nor will early refills be granted. Failure to attend scheduled medication appointments may result in refills not being processed. Please review the Controlled Substances Agreement for additional details.

Physical Examination

It is our policy to require that a physical examination be performed by a qualified primary care provider (PCP) within six months of intake for all individuals who are seeking psychopharmacology (medication management) services. If no examination has been done during that time frame, we ask that one be scheduled as soon as possible. Safety concerns caused by insufficient physical exam results and/or recommended medical testing may prevent us from prescribing medication to you.

Chemical Impairment and Laboratory Testing

We cannot provide treatment for any person that is suspected to be under the influence of illicit drugs, alcohol, and/or prescribed or non-prescribed medication. Clients who are suspected of being chemically impaired will be asked to reschedule their appointment for another day/time and applicable safety precautions will be taken (e.g. arranging for safe transportation home).

No illegal drugs are allowed in any property or its grounds. All individuals possessing legal or prescription drugs are requested to assure these are secure and not accessible to others.

It is our policy to obtain the results of blood and/or urine laboratory testing whenever it is medically necessary to do so, such as to determine if the body's response to prescribed medications is within safe limits, to determine if prescribed medication is present in the body (particularly for controlled medications) and to identify the use of drugs, alcohol and/or other medications.

Smoking, Vaping, and Tobacco Products

The office follows a policy of *NO smoking, vaping, or tobacco products* in the building and only in the designated area on the property. While in or around our facility, all individuals are asked to be considerate in the disposal of cigarettes, matches, etc. and are requested to ensure all vaping/tobacco products are secured and not accessible to others.

Weapons

Weapons are not permitted on the property or its grounds. Anyone who brings a weapon on site will be asked to remove the item(s) from the premises and may then return the same day so long as they do so weapon free. Repeated weapons possession on site or any single on-site weapons possession event which leads to a safety concern will result in termination from services.

Safety for Self and Others

In cases where any anyone is suspected of being chemically impaired, possessing illicit drugs, weapons, engaging in aggressive behavior, or is otherwise suspected to be at risk of being a danger to themselves and/or others actions may be taken to that person removed from the building voluntarily or involuntarily to maintain the safety of clients and staff. This may include calling for assistance from the local police department and other emergency personnel. In any such cases, including if a person is identified as having a substance use disorder, clinic staff will work with those involved to offer treatment recommendations internally and externally as applicable.

Client Rights

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law c. 111, § 70E, a comprehensive Notice of Patient Rights is posted in our waiting area and available to you in paper and electronic format at your request.

1. The right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times and to be free from discrimination based on race, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability status.
2. Be free of discomfort, distress and deprivation, and to receive services in the least restrictive and barrier-free setting to the maximum extent possible.
3. To file a complaint without fear of retaliation and have there be an investigation and resolution.
4. To obtain the name and applicable specialty of your treatment provider(s) upon your request.
5. To the privacy of your protected health information.
6. To have all reasonable requests responded to promptly and adequately.
7. To obtain a copy of any rules or regulations which apply to your conduct as a client.
8. To receive information the clinic has available about financial assistance upon your request.
9. To inspect your records and to receive a copy thereof without excessive charges applied or to challenge and annotate the information contained therein.
10. To refuse to be treated without jeopardizing access to other medical care or attention.
11. To refuse to serve as a research subject and to refuse any care or examination when the primary purpose is educational or informational rather than therapeutic.
12. To privacy during treatment sessions.
13. To prompt life-saving treatment in an emergency without undue delay or discrimination based on socioeconomic status or the source of payment.
14. To participate in your own treatment planning and to give informed consent to treatment.
15. To terminate treatment at any time.
16. To receive a copy of any bill or other statement of charges.

Client Responsibilities

1. Treat others with respect and dignity at all times and communicate in a calm and respectful demeanor.
2. Be actively engaged in your treatment through regular appointments and dynamic participation.
3. Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of other clients as applicable (e.g. group therapy).
4. Communicate openly and honestly with your providers.
5. Disclose symptoms, conditions, medications, and outside care providers that may help inform the treatment you receive at this office.
6. *Accept financial responsibility for the prompt and complete payment of services:* Arrange third-party insurance reimbursements and/or private pay agreements. Promptly report any changes to your insurance coverage or ability to pay for services. The client (or responsible party) is responsible for the payment of any identified deductibles, co-payments, and non-covered benefits. Payment is expected at the time of service. Sliding fee scale applications are available upon request.

Privacy Practices

Our office adheres to the regulations set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Mass. General Laws c.111 § 70E, The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”), and 42 CFR Part 2 – Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records. Additionally, we understand that our clients expect us to handle their private information in a professional and discreet manner. Patient records are maintained securely in digital format within an electronic medical record for no less than 20 years. Access to your record is restricted to only those employees involved in your care or who must access your record for essential business functions. All employees are trained in, and adhere to, strict standards of professional ethics and confidentiality. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your personal information and to provide you with this notice of our privacy practices and legal duties. We are required to abide by the terms of this notice. We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make any new provisions. If we revise this notice it will be posted prominently. You may request a copy of the current notice at any time.

Uses of Protected Health Information

- To provide treatment to you and in support of referring you to medically necessary services
- To obtain payment for services and treatment that we have provided
- To carry out healthcare operations that support the services we provide (e.g. audits, licensing)

Information We Collect About You

- From you, obtained directly, in conversations or on forms that you fill out
- From your insurance company or other parties that fund the services you receive
- From medical records or other treatment providers

Your Rights

You have a right to know how we may use or disclose your personal information. There are certain uses and disclosures of your personal information that we are permitted or required to make by law without your permission. For all other uses and disclosures, we first must obtain your permission. In addition, you have the right to request the following:

- Additional restrictions on our uses and disclosures of your personal information.
- An annual accounting of the disclosures of your personal information to other parties.
- That you receive communications of personal information in a confidential manner. You have the right to describe your preferred manner of receiving communication.
- A copy of the most current version of our Privacy Notice at any time.

Disclosures that May Be Made Only with Your Consent

All other uses or disclosures of your personal health information will be made only with your written permission, and any permission that you give use may be revoked by you at any time.

Disclosures that May Be Made Unless You Object

Submit any objections in writing to the Director of Clinical Operations

- Notifying family members or any other person identified by you regarding issues directly related to such person’s involvement with your care or payment for that care.
- Making appointment reminder phone calls or sharing appointment information with your care providers or other involved individuals who play a role in appointment scheduling or transportation.

Disclosures that May Be Made Without Authorization

- To facilitate the payment of services by your insurance provider or other third-party source.
- Within MOC to determine your eligibility for other MOC services, to analyze trends in services (aggregate data), and other internal business purposes.
- In the event of an imminent risk to yourself or others we may share information with emergency personnel, legal authorities, inpatient and crisis program staff, your family members, and/or other personal contacts.
- For anyone receiving prescription medication or laboratory services: demographic, diagnostic, medication, and other information is shared, exchanged, and stored with pharmacy and laboratory providers.

Disclosures that May Be Made Without Authorization (cont.)

- In the event of a threat to kill or seriously injure another, notifications to the threatened person and law enforcement.
- To relevant parties in the resolution of Worker's Compensation claims.
- To a public health authority for purposes of public health activities.
- To a government authority authorized to receive reports of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.
- To law enforcement officials, at our discretion, if we believe the disclosure is in your best interest or a report of your criminal activity towards our company or its employees.
- Required reporting of client deaths and to coroners, medical examiners, and funeral homes.
- Reviews and audits by regulatory, accrediting, and funding agencies to monitor quality and compliance.
- Internally for supervision, collaboration, quality assurance, and billing purposes.
- To correctional or penal institutions where you are incarcerated at the time of the disclosure.
- To military or to special agencies of the government of the United States or of a State.
- To relevant parties when there is a threat to the health or safety of you or of others.
- A court order or subpoena requiring testimony or your record.
- In the event of a medical emergency or other emergency situation.

Satisfaction with Services

Your complete satisfaction and confidence are incredibly important to us! If at any time you feel that a higher standard for privacy, safety, or quality could be achieved we want to hear about it. You are welcome to speak with any member of our staff and/or to the Director of Clinical Operations to give your feedback and input.

Each year, we conduct a formal satisfaction survey for people to provide input and suggestions about services and quality of care. We consider this feedback as vital in helping us to tailor and further develop our services and encourage you to complete the survey when it's offered to you.

How to Report a Complaint or Concern

The Counseling Center follows the Department of Public Health Regulations for Serious Complaint Procedures to assure prompt and complete investigations of all serious complaints that are filed against employees of the clinic and will not retaliate in any way if you should file a complaint.

The first step is to work with your provider and or reception staff to attempt to resolve your concern. If this is not feasible or successful, a written grievance should be submitted to the Director of Clinical Operations. This will initiate a formal review of the grievance that includes, as needed, escalating levels of internal and/or external review. You will be notified of the outcome of this review as soon as possible, but no less than 10 business days from its receipt. Please be advised that in some instances, certain details and resulting action steps may not be shared with you to protect privacy.

All concerns regarding alleged abuse or neglect should be immediately reported to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC), Elder Services or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Information on how to contact protection and regulatory agencies is included here for your reference:

- *The Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) Hotline: (800) 426-9009*
- *The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Child-at-Risk Hotline: (800) 792-5200*
- *Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Elder Abuse Hotline: (800) 922-2275*

For concerns related to operations, licensing, and regulatory compliance, *The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Hotline: (800) 462-5540*

Complaints and grievances may also be filed directly to your insurance company by calling the customer service number on the back of your insurance ID card.

For concerns about a violation to your rights with respect to your health information, you may file a complaint either directly with MOC's Director of Clinical Operations as outlined above or with the *Secretary of Health and Human*

Services, United States Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 (877) 696-6775. Refer also to the Privacy Notice for more information.

Managing Emergencies

Emergency Assistance

- For dangerous or life-threatening emergencies, go to the closest emergency room or dial 911.
- For mental health crisis assistance and assessment, the area Emergency Service Provider, Community Healthlink, can be reached 24/7 at (800) 977-5555.

Clients receiving services who require emergency medical treatment or emergency psychiatric evaluation will be transported via MedStar Ambulance service (1000 Battles St, Leominster, MA 01453; 978-466-1444) to the closest emergency room: UMass Memorial Health Alliance-Clinton Hospital (275 Nichols Rd, Fitchburg, MA 01420; 978-466-2000).

24/7 Urgent Assistance at the Clinic

- For dangerous or life-threatening emergencies, go to the closest emergency room or dial 911.
- For urgent matters during normal hours of operation, call the clinic's main number for assistance.
- For urgent matters outside of our normal days/hours, call the clinic's main number and follow the prompts to be connected with an afterhours on-call clinician.
- Be advised that routine matters (e.g scheduling, medication refills) cannot be managed outside of business hours and will need to wait until the next business day.

Inclement Weather and Other Emergency Events

- Please call us to confirm your appointment can still safely take place.
- In the event that the office is closed an automated message will be accessible by calling the office's main number.
- In the event that the Governor declares a state of emergency, the office will be closed.
- During a power or internet outage, services may be temporarily interrupted and you may be unable to contact our office. Call 911 or go to the closest emergency room to address urgent or emergency needs during this time. We will make every effort to contact you by alternate means during the outage regarding scheduling and to respond to any messages we receive. As long as it is safe to do so, people already on site when the outage occurs will be allowed to remain on site to complete their scheduled service.