

Welcome To Counseling

I feel honored that you have chosen me to assist you on your journey to achieving your goals. I look forward to being a part of your journey to explore new possibilities and attempt the initiate positive changes in your life.

To enable your counseling experience to be as productive and motivating as possible, this packet explains services offered by Positive Pathways Counseling, such as

- ✓ Explanation of professional counseling modalities offered at Positive Pathways
- ✓ Benefits of psychotherapy and professional counseling services
- ✓ Professional clinician's role as a participant during therapy sessions and what to expect from a Licensed Professional Counselor
- ✓ Client's role as the primary therapy participant
- ✓ Positive Pathways Counseling & Family Service's fee and payment policies, service pricing and accepted forms of payment at the counseling office
- ✓ Explanation of the HIPPA privacy act and how your private and personal information is mandated to be kept private and confidential, including any exceptions to the HIPPA privacy act and limitations to client ensured confidentiality
- ✓ Client process for requesting therapist to disclose any or partial medical information via informed consent form completion with counselor
- ✓ How to contact your therapist, appointment rescheduling/cancellation policies
- ✓ Positive Pathways policy regarding client contact of therapist via text
- ✓ Requesting information from your psychotherapy treatment file
- ✓ What to do in crisis situation if therapist is not available

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT COUNSELING SERVICES:

- Providing safe and secure environment during therapy sessions
- 50-minute sessions held on a regular basis with therapist are optional, although completing treatment program in its entirety is recommended & will significantly increase a client's future success to maintain positive treatment outcomes
- During sessions, a multimodal counseling approach will be employed by Whitney Scheef, MA, LPC and each session approach is tailored to fit each client's individual needs in therapy. That being said, CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy), REBT (rational emotive behavioral therapy), and multiple forms of PTSD-specific treatment models often form the foundation of most session interventions.
- Skills developed during sessions are the essential building blocks that create resilience, help improve social skills, and can lead an overall more fulfilling life if clients employ skills in and outside of therapy sessions.
- Unconditional Positive Regard and person-centered approach to services is used in counseling to enable a nonjudgmental, understanding and comfortable therapeutic relationship to be formed in treatment.

Security of Telephone Counseling:

The telephone may be used to collect personal information, and it is asked that only general information be requested and/or provided via email or any other form of contact that is not in session for protection of client confidential information.

Limitations of Services:

All clinicians working at Positive Pathways Counseling have been licensed by the Texas State Counseling Association & Board of Examiners to provide services. Although telephone consultation and counseling services are offered at Positive Pathways, they are typically not recommended as the primary modality of treatment intervention. If phone conversations are held frequently with a client who is out of state, an agreement for consulting, skills training or life coaching may be necessary if a client requests such services. Clients with situations involving serious mental health issues requiring intense psychotherapy must attend face-to-face sessions in our office. This is to be determined on an individual basis by the counseling provider with whom client is working.

Should a clinician feel that any issues that a client wishes to address in counseling is outside of that professional's scope of clinical knowledge, specialties or requires more intensive counseling services, we will refer that client to 3 appropriate providers that can better meet that client's specific needs. A client may resume Positive Pathways counseling services, should they desire, once they have completed the more specific or intensive counseling services. Before entering back into a counseling relationship at Positive Pathways Counseling, a client agrees to a brief evaluation of needs, and will enter into the agreed mode of counseling services at that time.

Risk of Life Changes: Therapy, counseling, crisis intervention, consultation and education services may have a profound impact. In counseling sessions, our work can be very intensive and may be stressful for clients at times. We will give you the option to proceed slowly, or at a more rapid pace, as client-centered clinicians. It is not possible for any ethical counseling professional to guarantee improvement in areas that a client wishes to work through in treatment, however counseling services have a proven high rate of success when the client(s) involved are actively engaged in their own treatment. The methods used in all counseling sessions have a precedent of being effective for improvement of issues presented by each individual client at Positive Pathways Counseling. Change, even positive change, tends to be difficult for most people, initially. Keeping this in mind, for some clients, symptoms may be intensified and the emotional experiences addressed in sessions can be difficult at times in treatment. Your provider, as a licensed professional counselor, is there to support you should any issues with change resulting from the work done during treatment occur. Your counselor will be available to discuss any concerns that may come up during your treatment and work together.

Expectations of Clients

✓ Attending your first counseling session shows that you desire positive change and assistance to learn independent management of difficult life situations. *It is important that clients understand that therapy is only as effective as the participants' willingness to practice and employ skills recommended by Positive Pathways Professionals. Attending therapy is the first step towards positive changes, however it is client motivation and consistency that enables those positive life changes to move from hopes and dreams into reality.*

✓ Due to the holistic approach taken at Positive Pathways Counseling, in order for appropriate therapeutic interventions to be provided, honesty during client intake assessments, and reporting of any changes that occur throughout treatment duration must be reported to your counseling provider. Withholding pertinent information impedes effective treatment and can be grounds for referral to more intensive counseling services and termination from Positive Pathways Counseling services. **HONESTY IS THE KEY TO FORMULATING A POSITIVE RAPPORT WITH YOUR THERAPIST.**

✓ Effective counseling sessions requires clients to be honest in their disclosure of information to enable an examination of issues from many perspectives. This will require you to examine your issue and how it effects your mind, body, relationships, financial standing, physical health, work situation, spiritual standpoint, or in any other way that you feel negatively affected in your life.

✓ If information is withheld from a therapist by session participants, this will significantly impede the benefits of therapy and often can render treatment ineffective

✓ You are aware of the voluntary nature of services offered in counseling and as such, you have the right to terminate services at any time you desire. *Positive Pathways has an 'Attempt to Contact' Policy before assuming that a client has decided to opt out of therapy treatment and will attempt no more than 3 times to contact a client who has missed a scheduled session. Positive Pathways has this policy due to our investment in ensuring clients are safe, have sufficient support and that they have been offered outside provider referrals should a client desire services from other treatment providers.*

✓ It is crucial for therapy participants to understand the vital role they have as active participants in treatment with their counselor. Client openness to insights gained in treatment sessions and willingness to adopt more helpful means to achieve treatment goals is one of the best determinants of successful counseling treatment outcomes.

Legal Issues

Positive Pathways will not provide legal advice and have no service ability to do so. Your counselor can assist you by providing referrals for seeking legal counsel upon your request. It is a policy of this office not to provide assessments or recommendations in support of legal actions such as child custody, competency evaluations, or civil lawsuits (although exceptions due to extenuating circumstances are made on a case-by-case basis). **Please notify your therapist immediately if you are or become involved in a legal or criminal matter. We are here to advocate for our clients in their best interest and have ethical duties to do so.**

Consent of Minors

It is a Positive Pathways Counseling policy to work with children only when parents are also involved, and whenever possible, any parental figure in a child's life deemed as influential is vital for effective change in treatment with children and teens. If you are not the medical power of attorney for your child, a consent from the medical guardian must be obtained, as stated by Texas State Laws. Our clinicians will not work with minors who object to involving their parents in some sessions.

Patients under the age of 18 whom are not emancipated should be made aware that their parents have the right to request to examine their child's records at any time during treatment. *In an attempt to encourage comfort while sharing information during a therapy session with minors, for children between the age of 14 to 17, it is a policy to request that parents be informed only on a need-to-know basis (as determined by the treating professional) what children divulge to their counselor during sessions.* If this is agreed upon by the parents, a signed limited consent form for minors may be requested upon initial client assessment. At the termination of treatment, parents will be given a summary of the treatment their child received if requested. Any other communication with the parent and therapist will only include pertinent and essential treatment aspects, and will not provide specifics regarding session content, unless safety concerns have been noted by overseeing clinician. *Before giving parents any information, counselors will attempt to discuss their concerns with the child, if possible, and will provide them with the opportunity to disclose concerns to their parents with the support of their counselor to encourage independent voluntary disclosure.*

Divorce Decrees, Agreements to Final Orders in Suits to Establish Parentage and Any Agreed Court Orders Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship or Custody:

Court orders and legal paperwork are very specific. Our office must have a copy of such paperwork prior to treating a minor. The responsibility to inform the other parent of intentions of pursuing counseling falls on the parent seeking counseling for their child prior to treatment. We feel strongly about parental involvement in counseling. Ideally, both legal parents, and any parental figures, will present during the first counseling session. This will ensure involvement of all parties participate in the counseling process for the good of the minor entering treatment. We know that this is not always possible and will discuss this policy on a case-by-case basis with each client & guardian(s).

Evaluation for Services:

Psychological disorders and symptoms often have a strong correlation with medical illnesses. At times, some medical conditions require a medical differential diagnosis to determine symptom origins. If your presenting symptoms are a result of a medical condition, it is critical that you obtain medical evaluation & treatment. Therefore, if you have not had a physical in the last 6 months, is will be requested by Positive Pathways Counseling that you do so. Referrals for Primary Care Physicians or Psychiatric Providers will be offered upon initial client evaluations.

At our Irving location, we work closely with both PCP and Psychiatric clinicians and can offer our clients an affordable rate if they are uninsured for the clinicians in our Irving, TX office. You are not required to seek medical care from the clinicians in our office, but we offer this as a convenient and unique service to Positive Pathway clients.

*Prescription and nonprescription medications may have significant side effects that are important for us to consider. We expect full disclosure of all medicines and all drugs used by our clients upon intake and may request a Release of Information so that we can coordinate therapeutic services with your physician. Services provided upon obtaining your signed consent include service coordination of therapeutic assessments, psychological evaluations, assessment-based interventions, crisis intervention, counseling, psychotherapy and client education. **No service coordination with medical professionals will be provided without your consent.***

Treatment is Optional and Not Required:

Counseling, psychotherapy and crisis intervention services are not required. We do not work with people who are forced to seek treatment by others. You are free to limit or end treatment at any time. Your wellbeing and stability is important to all staff at Positive Pathways Counseling & Medical Staff that we work closely with. Please make a commitment to attend counseling sessions if you feel you benefit from the services offered during counseling.

Termination of Services:

The client or counselor may choose to terminate the counseling relationship at any time. The party choosing to terminate the relationship, agrees to contact the other party through e-mail or written letter, with reasons for termination. The client may choose to terminate the counseling relationship at any time. *If you are not treated by our staff for a period of time exceeding 8 weeks, we will view this as your choice to terminate our counseling relationship.* You are free to reach out to us for further assistance at any time in the future after the counseling relationship has been terminated or therapy has been completed. *However we will need to complete a full assessment to enable you to establish treatment with Positive Pathways Counseling due to the many changes that can take place over this extenuated timeframe.* Please notify us if you would like to be referred to another counselor, as we would gladly do so without further questioning at any time during or after your treatment with our office staff. Our counselors may terminate therapy if they feel the client has reached their goals, the client is not progressing under the counselor's care, or the counselor is not qualified to provide the services needed at this time. The counselor agrees to provide the client with referrals for more appropriate services should this be needed.

Contacting your Provider

Positive Pathways strives to offer exemplary care and additional support to our clients outside of therapy sessions and attempt to provide clients with access to their therapist should additional support be requested. We encourage utilizing this resource as a tool for difficult times encountered outside of therapy that may impede achievement of treatment goals. The Positive Pathways Primary Therapist's Number is (682) 206-9205. By calling this you will reach Whitney Scheef, MA, LPC. If you call after office hours, please leave a message with your call back number, our primary counselor/CEO, or your overseeing treatment provider, will contact you back as soon as they are able within 24-48 business hours, with holidays as the only weekday exception.

Positive Pathways takes pride in our ability to provide easy access to our clinicians with rapid response times. With this in mind, it is not always possible to guarantee a therapist's availability after office hours for every request made, and we are not equipped to handle any immediate crisis-situation. Therefore, **IF FOR ANY REASON YOU FEEL YOU ARE IN AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS THAT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE RESPONSE, ALWAYS CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY & GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM.** Please note that the services offered at this facility are outpatient and not emergency services.

Although additional support via phone and/or e-mail is offered, **any phone contact exceeding 7 minutes in length outside of session, will be billed at 15-minute intervals at a rate of \$25.00. In addition, more than two e-mails per week sent that are requiring a provider's response, or are lengthy enough that they require more than 15 minutes to read between session periods, will be billed in 15-minute intervals at rate of \$25.00 per email exceeding the 2 email limit. This includes communication from clients, permitted family members, or medical personnel, hospitals, or any other service providers who are involved with a client's care.**

NOTE: This is a service offered to clients as a support. We encourage utilizing this service sparingly, as fostering independence and self-motivation is the most effective, long-lasting approach to counseling treatment success.

WE HAVE A POLICY THAT ASKS THAT CLIENTS DO NOT TEXT YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION OR THERAPEUTIC QUESTIONS BETWEEN SESSIONS.

The messages are not encrypted. Positive Pathways does provide the option for clients to receive appointment reminders via phone call or text from our automated system 48 hours prior to their session time. This service will only be done with your consent and understanding that texts are not encrypted.

Appointments

Appointments for counseling sessions are scheduled by calling (682)206-9205. **This number is not used for important information to be sent via texts and please do not send texts regarding counseling or personal issues that should be addressed in session, email is preferred if you are trying to send information that is appropriate in nature and that pertains to your therapy treatment. Written information should be delivered to your therapist via email or during your 50-minute therapy session.**

NOTE: Appointment cancellation or rescheduling is required to be done VIA PHONE CALL TO YOUR PROVIDER ONLY, and will no longer be allowed via text. PLEASE LEAVE A VOICE MESSAGE REGARDING CANCELLATION AND STAFF WILL PROMPTLY GET BACK TO YOU. We provide text appointment reminders that allow you to cancel your appointment, however this is an automated system is meant ONLY for complementary client reminders, and your cancellation MUST be confirmed by calling Positive Pathways 24-hours in advance of your scheduled appointment time, or the appointment will be charged as a no show.

YOU MAY NOT CANCEL APPOINTMENTS VIA TEXT OR EMAIL. THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE, AUTOMATED REMINDERS DO NOT INFORM THERAPISTS OF CANCELLATION. A CALL TO OUR OFFICE IS REQUIRED SHOULD YOU CANCEL YOUR APPOINTMENT UPON THE REMINDERS FROM OUR AUTOMATED SYSTEM THAT ARE SENT OUT 48 HOURS PRIOR TO YOUR SESSION TIME.

Positive Pathways has a 24-hour cancellation policy for counseling sessions. If you cannot make your scheduled appointment, please contact the office a minimum of 24 hours prior to your scheduled appointment time. We understand that unforeseen issues happen that do not always enable 24-hours notice to be provided for rescheduling appointments. Positive Pathways will allow contingencies for this policy on a case-by-case basis; **however, forgetting appointments, work-related issues and social events are not given contingency to our 24-hour cancellation policy.**

NOTE: Illness will only be excused with a doctor's note provided with the date of appointment and excuse written by doctor confirming illness to avoid no show charges. For missing appointments without providing 24-hours notice, clients will be billed the full amount of the session price.

Intake Assessments

Intake appointments typically take 60 – 90 minutes. Follow-up appointments will be 50 minutes in length. You may make a prior request for a longer or shorter session length via phone call to the Positive Pathway office. Positive Pathways prides itself on providing counseling services tailored to clients' individual support needs and we strive to accommodate requests for session length extension or additional services needed by our clientele.

NOTE: *Payments are accepted upon client's arrival to each counseling session by your counselor. We accept payment forms that suit client preferences via cash, credit card, FSA spending account card, check or money order made out to Positive Pathways Counseling or to Whitney Scheef, MA, LPC.*

PLEASE BRING A COPY OF YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE AND A CREDIT/DEBIT CARD TO YOUR INITIAL APPOINTMENT TO KEEP ON FILE IN OUR ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS SYSTEM, WHICH IS USED FOR APPOINTMENT BILLING AND DOCUMENTATION.

A \$50.00 charge is required for all returned client checks in addition to the amount of the payment itself. Should this situation occur, Positive Pathways will not accept this client's checks for session payment as a form of payment for sessions in the future

FEES AND PAYMENT

Initial Intake Assessment \$125.00

The Initial session is a crucial point in establishment of trust and gaining an understanding of the issues bringing you to counseling. This session also enables the formulation of your initial treatment diagnosis. Initial Treatment Plan begins during the initial session and continues to progress along with treatment sessions.

Individual Counseling Session \$95.00

Individual sessions include 50-minute one-on-one coaching with a licensed professional counselor in the privacy of the Positive Pathways Counseling office. Alternative treatment service settings outside of the Positive Pathway Counseling Office may be suggested by your counselor for therapeutic purposes, or upon client request, however this is to be discussed with your counselor on an individual client basis.

After hours crisis Psychotherapy Session \$125.00

Crisis sessions provided face-to-face, skype, or telephone include 50-minute one-on-one coaching with a licensed professional counselor that have been scheduled outside of Positive Pathway's normal office hours of operation with short-notice due to an unforeseen psychological issue that may require immediate attention (this service is not always available).

Brief Interventions via Telephone, Email or Service
Coordination contacts (exceeding 7 minutes or 2 email limit
permitted) \$25.00- 15 min interval

This fee will be billed on the day the contact occurred using the payment form provided during your initial visit, and for after-hours calls the charge will be billed the following day. Your Counselor will provide you with an invoice of the contact during your next office visit per client's request for statement.

Documentation/Paperwork Requests \$50.00- 30 min interval

It is Positive Pathways asks that clients allow at least 14 days from initial paperwork request for paperwork completion from the Positive Pathways Office staff or counseling director, Whitney Scheef, MA, LPC. We always attempt to complete paperwork and other paperwork requests from clients as quickly as possible. We reserve the right, at any time, to refuse to complete paperwork we feel could ethically conflict with our office adherence to ethical guidelines provided by the Texas State Board for Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors, American Counseling Association ethics, or Positive Pathways Policies to provide ethically sound and quality counseling and psychotherapy services.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO CLIENTS

We do offer sliding scale fee based on an individual client's or family's household net income and family size. We recognize that this is an important service that we can offer, particularly in these tough economic times. A sliding scale fee schedule is used to calculate the sliding scale discount and is updated each year using the Federal Poverty Guidelines for the United States. Once approved for sliding scale accommodations, the discount will be honored for 6 months, in which time, the client must reapply. In order to receive sliding scale fee consideration, we require federal tax ID information from the individual seeking counseling at sliding scale rates. If a client needs a copy of their tax return they can do so free of charge from the IRS by calling 1-800-829-1040 and requesting a tax transcript. Sliding scale clients are seen based on openings available. If no openings are available to the time and individual seeks services, you will be offered referral to other affordable counseling offices or you may opt to be placed on a waiting list.

Because of the problems with managed care and their increasing need for confidential information, we have decided not to participate on insurance panels at this time. We have some concerns about the need to give clients a mental health diagnosis and the possible repercussions as a result of some misunderstandings about mental health diagnosis and services. We are, however, willing to work with your insurance company so that you may be reimbursed for our services. Please note that time for this is billable to you in 15-minute increments. You will need to check with your insurance about their policies for out-of-network coverage. If you are unsure of how to do this, we are happy to assist you in learning how to contact insurance and will provide service coordination with insurances regarding reimbursement during your session or will bill for service coordination efforts should you opt for this service. We are glad to print your charges on the proper forms (Superbill Statements) required for your insurance reimbursement and will provide them to you in session.

Insurance companies require us to provide you with a clinical diagnosis. Some require that we also add treatment plans or summaries, or, in rare cases, copies of the entire session record. This information will become part of the insurance company's files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies report that these records are confidential, we have no control over what happens to it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share information with a national medical information data bank. We will provide you with a copy of any report that we submit if you request it. At this time we are accepting client payment for services but we are willing to provide documentation to assist you in billing your own insurance company upon receiving a signed consent from you to release such information.

CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The therapeutic process may be very different for different people involving varying durations of skills training treatment. As a client, you may choose to end the therapeutic relationship at any time and/or request therapy referral(s). A client may also request termination of services and/or outside referrals at a time mutually agreed upon by you and your counselor. I encourage all clients to participate in a termination session(s) in order to complete the therapeutic process; however it is not required if client should decline participation in discharge process.

_____ (initial) I understand the 24-hour cancellation policy at Positive Pathways Counseling & understand that it states that if I neglect to cancel my appointment via phone call at least 24 hours prior to my scheduled session, I will be responsible for paying the charge for my session.

_____ (initial) I understand and authorize Positive Pathways Counseling to keep my billing information on file and agree to authorize Positive Pathways to use this information to charge for sessions that have been scheduled with my therapist that I did not attend and have not provided 24-hours advanced notice of my appointment cancellation via telephone.

_____ (Initial) I understand the HIPPA Privacy Practices used by Positive Pathways Counseling office and have been provided with Notice of my Rights as a client, information regarding what to expect from my therapist, and have a full understanding of my confidentiality and limitations to confidentiality rights.

In signing below, I _____ (Print Name) acknowledge that I have read and understand the information included in this form as a new client of Positive Pathways Counseling services. I give my voluntary, informed consent for services provided by Positive Pathways Counseling and, by signing my name below, I show that I fully understand that I am voluntarily entering into counseling services, accepting of the fees for services and agree to all of the Positive Pathway Counseling office procedures and policies.

Signature of client/client's legal representative

Date Signed

Signature of Witness to Client Signature

Date Signed

Whitney Scheef, MA, LPC
Printed Name of Counselor Witness to Client Agreement