



**Informed Consent Statement**  
**Sandy Pulos, Graduate Student Intern**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your counselor. This information is designed to let you know about my educational and professional background, and to ensure that you understand our professional relationship. I am committed to providing you with quality, professional counseling, and your questions or comments are encouraged.

**Education, Credentials and Experience**

I am a graduate student intern working toward my M. A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling through Liberty University, with anticipated completion in December of 2021. I received my Bachelors of Business Administration in Industrial Relations/Human Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1989. As a student intern, I have completed core courses in counseling prior to beginning my clinical experience, including coursework in human development, ethics, theories of counseling, counseling techniques, marriage and family therapy, and group counseling. Practicum and internship courses are a developmental sequence in which I apply my knowledge under intensive supervision. I am currently also participating in Spiritual Integration Training, a two-year program provided through the Samaritan Institute, designed to help me integrate spirituality in the therapeutic process.

**Therapeutic Relationship**

Your counseling services will be based on a relationship of trust and respect. You and I will work together to identify goals for counseling and move toward achieving those goals. The counseling sessions may include an exploration of thoughts, feelings, personal history, communication styles, attitudes and beliefs about self and others, and personal development needs. As a counselor-in-training, I receive supervision from two sources: (1) a licensed counselor through Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast, who is also a state-registered Qualified Supervisor; and (2) a Liberty University faculty member who is a licensed mental health counselor and has training in supervision.

It is important to remember that your active involvement in the counseling process will be the most influential contribution to your success. Your input is essential in establishing treatment goals, examining risks and benefits of change, and making the time commitment involved in

achieving your therapeutic goals. Periodically, we will evaluate your progress and, if necessary, redesign your treatment plan, goals, and/or methods. If you are interested, we will integrate your spiritual values and beliefs into the counseling process. This integration will also help you find balance in spirit, soul, and body to help navigate life challenges and difficult circumstances.

As with any successful intervention, there are both benefits and risks associated with counseling. Risks might include experiencing uncomfortable levels of feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, or difficulties with other people. Some changes may appear to worsen your circumstances in the short run; however, over time, with consistent commitment, you should experience improvement.

### **Client's Rights and Responsibilities**

Clients have the right to receive counseling in which the individual's dignity, worth, and uniqueness are respected. I will provide you with quality informed services that are offered under close supervision. However, the success of the therapeutic relationship depends on your willingness to be open and involved in the process. As a student intern, I may ask you if I can video record some of your counseling sessions (which will not contain any personally identifying information). The recording of sessions is something that will be further discussed with you and you have the right to allow or to refuse this process to take place. All recordings, if authorized by you, will be destroyed at the end of the semester in which services are provided. If you agree to this process, which will serve my training needs, I will ask for your written consent. Finally, clients have the right to receive services that are confidential.

### **Confidentiality**

I regard the information you share with me with the greatest respect, so I want to be as clear as possible about how it will be handled. Generally, my supervisor (William Martin), group supervision members (if you signed the video recording consent form), and I are ethically obligated to maintain confidentiality, sharing nothing discussed in counseling sessions with others. The privacy and confidentiality of our conversations, and my records, are your privilege and are protected by state law and my profession's ethical principles, in all but a few circumstances. If there is a need to share information in your record, you will first be consulted and asked to sign a release of information form authorizing a transfer of information. The form will specify the information, which you give me permission to release to the other party and will limit the time period during which the information may be released. You can revoke your permission at any time by simply giving me written notice, and it is revoked from that day forward.

There are the exceptions in which my supervisor and I cannot guarantee confidentiality, legally and/or ethically: (1) when I believe you intend to harm yourself or another person; and, (2)

when I believe a child or vulnerable adult (elder or a person with a disability) has been or is in danger of being abused or neglected, and (3) in rare circumstances, professional counselors can be ordered by a judge to release information. Otherwise, my supervisor and I will not reveal anything about your treatment, diagnosis, history, or even that you are a client without your full knowledge and consent. Please be aware that Samaritan utilizes Quality Control Best Practices to ensure both confidentiality and service review.

### **Explanation of Dual Relationships**

Although our sessions may be very intimate psychologically and spiritually, it is important for you to be assured that we have a professional relationship rather than a social one. Our contact will be limited to sessions you will arrange with me. Because I desire to respect your privacy, I will not speak to you in public, unless you first acknowledge or speak to me. I cannot accept friend requests on social media from clients. Because ours is a professional relationship, I cannot accept gifts having monetary value.

### **Cancellation Policy**

We will schedule our sessions through our mutual agreement. **If you are unable to keep an appointment, please call my cell phone at 414-916-9122 to cancel or reschedule at least 24 hours in advance. While there is no charge for your counseling services, since I am a graduate student intern, this courtesy allows another client to use this time slot.**

### **Length of Sessions**

I assure you that my services will be rendered in a professional manner consistent with the highest ethical standards. Typically, sessions are 45 to 50 minutes in duration.

### **Emails and Text Messages**

In order to protect your private health information in compliance with HIPPA, please **do not** email or text confidential information or details about therapy. Email and text will be limited to scheduling of appointments and forwarding resources as relevant. I am unable to provide therapy interventions or recommendations via email or text. If you have a question or comment in-between sessions, please call or reserve these notes for the next scheduled appointment.

### **Working with Minors and Parents**

While privacy in psychotherapy is very important, particularly with adolescents, parental involvement is also essential to successful treatment and this may require that some information be shared with parents as it relates to helping the child or teen implement our interventions and if there is a risk or danger to the child or teen. Information shared will be at the discretion of the therapist based on protecting the therapeutic relationship with the child and teenager. If you

share legal custody parental consent from both parents is needed. Documentation to support parental custody and or signature of both parents may be requested.

### **Fees/Method of Payment**

As a graduate student intern, my counseling services are provided at no charge (\$0) to you.

### **Emergencies**

If your situation is an emergency, you should call 911 at any time of day or night. In Sarasota, crisis assistance is available by calling or going to Bayside Center for Behavioral Health at 800-764-8477 or 941-917-7760 or Coastal Behavioral Healthcare's 24-hour Crisis Stabilization Unit at 941-364-9355. In Manatee County, you may call or go to Centerstone Emergency Psychiatric Center at 941-782-4617 or Suncoast Behavioral Health Center at 941-251-5000.

### **Telephone Availability**

You may leave a non-emergency message on my cell phone at 414-916-9122 during my normal business hours, from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. I will make every reasonable effort to return your call within 24 hours. Please do not call me on holidays or weekends unless you need to leave a message to cancel an appointment.

As stated above, in compliance with HIPAA regulations, I cannot respond to email or text messages containing private information; if I receive such from you, I will delete it without responding or acknowledging it. Please use electronic means of communication for appointment scheduling or changes only.

### **Vacation and Illness**

I will, from time to time, be out of contact due to such things as continuing education seminars, vacations, family emergencies and illness. If you want to meet with a therapist during my absence, arrangements may be made in advance or by calling the office at 941-926-2959. I will attempt to give you adequate advanced notice when possible. Please remember if an emergency arises to dial 911 or go to your nearest hospital emergency room.

### **Complaint Procedures**

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of my work, please let me know immediately. I want to provide you with the best possible counseling services. If you think you have been treated unfairly or unethically, by me or any other counselor, and cannot resolve the problem with me, you may contact Rev. Rick Howell, Executive Director of the Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast at 941-926-2959, 3224 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, Florida 34239. You can submit a complaint or receive clarification of your rights from Rev. Howell.