

Next Direction Counseling, PLLC, 2600 Behan Rd., Suite E3, Crystal Lake, IL 60014

815-888-3233

Informed Consent for Counseling

If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, please call 911 for immediate assistance.

The counseling relationship is unique in that it is a highly personal and, at the same time, contractual agreement. Therefore, it is important for us to reach a clear understanding about how our relationship will work and what each of us can expect. This Informed Consent for Counseling and the other documents submitted to you in your client portal will provide a clear framework for our work together. Feel free to discuss any questions with us. Please read and indicate that you have reviewed this information and agree to it by filling in the electronic signature checkbox at the end of this document.

The Counseling Process

You have taken a very positive step by deciding to seek counseling. We believe in counseling's ability to heal and inspire growth and we will encourage and support you through the experience. Counseling is a professional relationship in which the counselor assists the client in exploring and resolving difficult life issues. Yet, the outcome of your counseling depends largely on your willingness to engage in the process which may, at times, result in discomfort. Remembering unpleasant events, examining emotions, and gaining new insight to current and past difficulties, etc. can bring on strong and, perhaps, difficult feelings. Beyond the risk of discomfort, the potential benefits of counseling often emerge. For example, clients may increase their coping and problem-solving skills, develop a new sense of empowerment, find positive personal growth, or achieve greater awareness about their circumstances reaching acceptance, resolution, or closure.

There are no miracle cures and we cannot promise change. However, we can promise to collaborate with you and to assist you in clarifying what it is that you want for yourself. We hope to build your trust and confidence in us and the benefits of counseling. Our goal is to respect your individuality and promote your freedom and capacity to navigate the issues that brought you to counseling. The duration of counseling depends on the client and complexity of the issue(s). Some clients may only need a few sessions to feel complete. Others may need more time in session before they feel comfortable facing challenges without counseling's support.

In early counseling sessions, we collect relevant information about you, what brought you to counseling, and your goals to help define how we will use our time together. When beneficial, you may be asked to practice new skills or complete homework outside of session because the work of counseling must transition into everyday life. Please know there are many theoretic approaches to counseling. Within our scope of practice, we attempt to select and integrate professionally supported orientations to assist your counseling goals. Questions are always welcome and encouraged because the process of counseling is more effective when it is not a mystery but an experience where you have opportunity to take an active participatory role.

Confidentiality

What you and your counselor discuss in session is confidential. Next Direction Counseling is legally and ethically bound to protect the information you share. However, there are situations in which mental health professionals have a legal duty to limit confidentiality as follows:

- Threats of safety exist to yourself or others.
- Abuse or neglect or suspected abuse or neglect of minors, the elderly, or disabled.
- If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena for the information stated on the subpoena.
- You request in writing information be released to a named third party.

Occasionally, your counselor may need to consult with other professionals in their areas of expertise in order to provide you with responsible and comprehensive healthcare. Information about you may be shared in this context without exposing your identity. If you see Next Direction Counseling staff by chance outside of the counseling office, we will not acknowledge you first. Your right to confidentiality is of utmost importance to us and we do not wish to jeopardize your privacy. However, if you acknowledge us first, we will be more than happy to speak with you briefly but feel it appropriate not to engage in any lengthy discussions in public or outside of the counseling office. Please also refer to the Notification of Privacy Practices for more information about confidentiality and your privacy rights.

Minors and Confidentiality

Parents and guardians of minors are legally entitled to certain information about the minor's counseling process. At the same time, counseling is facilitated when the minor has confidence that his/her privacy is respected. Therefore, it is important to establish considerate confidentiality boundaries between all parties in a joint discussion. Typically, meeting for this purpose occurs at an initial counseling session.

Client Rights

You have the right to end the counseling relationship at any time and Next Direction Counseling will be supportive of your decision. We do ask that you allow us to discuss ending the counseling relationship so that we may address any concerns and, if you wish, offer you resources and referrals.

Next Direction Counseling takes appropriate measures to keep secure client records and you have the right to review them as outlined in the Notification of Privacy Practices you received. Because certain language in professional documentation may be confusing, we request reviewing the material with you to provide explanations and avoid possible misinterpretations.

Counseling Closure

Ending relationships can be difficult and moving forward independently after counseling may cause some clients anxiety. Therefore, it is important to have a process in place to achieve healthy closure. The appropriate length of closure depends on how long the client has been in counseling and the intensity of the counseling process. Closure is typically a natural and collaborative part of an effective counseling relationship and begins when both the client and counselor agree that counseling goals have been met, the client is comfortable with their progress, and a plan is in place to maintain this outcome. Of course, after closure you are always welcome to schedule appointments as needed or reengage in the counseling process.

In some cases, we may discontinue counseling if we believe the professional services are not advancing the client's best interest or if the client is in default on payment. We will not end the counseling relationship without first discussing and exploring the reasons and purpose of discontinuation. If counseling ends for any reason or you request another counselor, we can provide you with a list of qualified professionals to work with you. You may also choose someone on your own or from another referral source.

Should you fail to schedule an appointment for three consecutive weeks, unless other arrangements have been made in advance, for legal and ethical reasons, Next Direction Counseling must consider the professional relationship closed.

Professional Qualifications

Next Direction Counseling is licensed in the state of Illinois. Individual counselors qualify in Illinois as Licensed Professional Counselors by meeting and completing national and state master's level educational standards developed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and must receive board certification by passing a national examination administered by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).