



Counseling Information and Confidentiality Policy

Mission Statement

Our mission is to transform Pickens County into a community that is a safe space for facilitating healing and offers support for all survivors of sexual violence.

Counseling Information

Therapy focused on trauma is often a difficult process; it can also be a joyous one. Clients coming to Pickens County Advocacy Center can expect competent and professional services, therapists trained in trauma-informed treatment choices, and to be treated with respect. The therapeutic relationship is unique in that it is a highly personal and at the same time, a contractual agreement. Therapy is effective when the client and therapist are united in a therapeutic alliance and are together committed to the process of healing.

Therapeutic Goals

You will have individual therapeutic goals that you determine in your treatment plan with your therapist. However, these are general goals we have for all our clients and secondary survivors:

- Understand how sexual trauma has impacted you, your brain, and your nervous system
- Understand how to respond to / manage triggers or activating events
- Develop healthy coping skills and increase emotion regulation; improve daily life and reduce negative side effects of trauma
- Identify values and cultivate a life worth living
- Help family members, caregivers, and loved ones understand and support trauma survivors and develop skills to manage their own distress caused by secondary trauma
- Identify and build traits of healthy relationships and secure attachment

Information on Counseling Sessions & Attendance Policies

- **Length:** Sessions typically last 45-60 minutes.
- **Frequency:** Counseling at Pickens County Advocacy Center is designed to be short-term therapy, typically 8-20 sessions, focusing on the impacts of sexual violence. Session frequency (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) will be based on client needs and therapist availability. However, there is no set timeline for the therapeutic process, and no guarantees can be made regarding outcomes.
- **Access:** Access to free counseling from Pickens County Advocacy Center is available for one year.
- **Cancellation notice:** A 24-hour notice is required to cancel or reschedule an appointment.
- **Late arrivals:** Appointments will be considered canceled if the client does not arrive by 15 minutes from the scheduled start time.
- **Client responsibility:** It is the client's responsibility to show up on time for scheduled appointments. It is the client's responsibility to communicate emergencies, cancellations, or expected tardiness with the therapist. It is the client's responsibility to follow up with the therapist after a missed appointment. Pickens County Advocacy Center is unable to send appointment reminders.
- **Case closures:** After three missed/no-show appointments, the case file may be closed. If one month passes without client contact, the case file may be closed. A notice will be sent prior to case closure.
- **Reopening cases:** Clients may request to be placed on the waiting list if they wish to recommit to counseling after case closure. This is contingent upon the therapy team's discretion.
- **Emergencies:** Exceptions to these policies may be made for emergencies at the therapist's discretion.

Boundaries and Limitations

- **Client rights:** You have the right to
 - Ask questions about any aspect of therapy
 - Decline any treatment suggestions
 - Request a referral or transfer
 - End therapy at anytime
- **Professional relationship:** Counseling is a therapeutic and professional relationship. The therapist's role is to provide support and guidance, not personal friendship. However, your therapist will support you and work to understand you, as well as to help you clarify what you want for yourself. Your therapist will discuss your desired outcomes during the formulation of your treatment plan and through regular progress checkpoints throughout therapy.

- **Concurrent services:** If multiple service providers are involved, a release of information will be required for collaboration. In most cases, concurrent services with multiple therapists simultaneously are not recommended.
- **Referrals:** If therapeutic needs extend beyond the scope of Pickens County Advocacy Center's services (e.g., severe mental health concerns, substance use disorders), referrals to appropriate providers will be made.
- **Outside contact:** Social media or personal communication outside of therapy sessions is not permitted to maintain professional boundaries.
- **Email:** Please be aware that Pickens County Advocacy Center email is not encrypted or confidential, and as such, privacy cannot be guaranteed. It is not recommended to send sensitive or clinically important information via email. If desired, email can be used for scheduling appointments and other general inquiries/communications.

Ethical Guidelines

All Pickens County Advocacy Center counselors follow professional ethical standards regarding:

- Confidentiality and privacy
- Informed consent
- Professional boundaries
- Cultural sensitivity and respect for client dignity

Clinical supervision is provided to ensure the highest standards of ethical and professional care.

Termination and Follow-Up Procedures

Therapy may conclude when:

- Treatment goals are met
- The client requests termination
- Case closure policies apply
- The therapist recommends alternate services

Follow-up sessions may be offered as periodic check-ins post-therapy. Upon termination, clients may receive and/or request referrals for continued care or alternate services. Records are retained for 7-10 years per South Carolina state policy.

Confidentiality Policy and Limitations

All information obtained during counseling is confidential, with the following exceptions:

1. **Risk of harm:** If you express intent to harm yourself or someone else, or if your therapist determines you are at high risk of harming yourself or someone else, your therapist may take steps required to keep you and others safe. This may involve reporting to law enforcement and/or involuntary hospitalization.

2. **Abuse or neglect:** If you disclose abuse or neglect of a child or any vulnerable adult, your therapist is required by law to notify law enforcement and/or the Department of Social Services. This is called mandated reporting.
3. **Legal requirements:** If a subpoena signed by a judge is served, your therapist will provide the minimum required information as described by the subpoena.
4. **Grant reviews:** Agency data and random client records may be reviews by federal, state, or local grant monitors for compliance purposes.
5. **Release of information:** If you sign a written authorization for release of information, your therapist may share your information with the subject of the release.
6. **Clinical supervision:** Therapists may discuss case details (without identifying information) for training or supervision purposes. All therapists at Pickens County Advocacy Center are required to uphold the agency's confidentiality policy.

All records are securely stored and protected from unauthorized access. Information may only be shared in emergency situations when necessary to prioritize client safety and well-being. Pickens County Advocacy Center's goal is to protect client privacy; in the event of a disclosure, the minimum amount of information needed will be disclosed.

Consent & Acknowledgment

By signing below, you acknowledge that:

- You have read, understood, and agreed to the policies outlined above.
- You voluntarily consent to participate in therapy at Pickens County Advocacy Center.
- You understand your rights, responsibilities, and limitations as a client.

I, _____, have received, read, and understand the above agreement and consent to the treatment of myself / my child at Pickens County Advocacy Center.

Client or Guardian Signature

Date

Therapist Signature

Date