

# Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC

## Client Contact and Social Media Policies

This document describes Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC's client contact, social media policies and general procedures for getting help in a crisis situation.

### **If you are in crisis and feel you are a danger to yourself or others:**

**Call 911 or your local emergency number or go immediately to the nearest emergency facility. DO NOT contact the administrative office of Pathways of Ohio Counseling or your psychotherapist until you are safe and stable.**

### **CONTACT BETWEEN YOU AND OUR STAFF**

#### ***Contact with the Office staff***

The office telephone numbers are: **330-921-8308 or 330-787-9817**. Our 330-787-9817 telephone number is a land based line and does not have texting capabilities. Our email address is [pathwaysohio@comcast.net](mailto:pathwaysohio@comcast.net).

Although an office staff member may not always be in our office, someone is generally available to take your telephone calls, view your emails and receive your text messages from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. If our psychotherapists have scheduled Saturday appointments, the phone line to the office will be open, but this is not always the case and Saturdays are not considered to be a "business day".

If the office staff does not answer when you call, please leave a detailed message as to the nature of your call. An office staff member will make every effort to return your call or respond to your email or text within the same business day. If we cannot respond to you the same day, an office staff member will return your call by 4:00 PM of the next business day.

Remember email and text messaging are NOT secure methods of communication. You are risking your confidentiality if you choose to disclose specifics about the nature of your call when you use either of these methods to communicate with the Pathways of Ohio Counseling office, so please use discretion when emailing or texting.

If you call the office outside of regular office hours, your call will automatically be forwarded to Help Hotline (see out-of-hours support).

If you are sending a text or email message outside of regular office hours, the text or email will not be accessed or viewed until the next business day.

#### ***Out of Hours Support***

If you are not in crisis but feel you would benefit by speaking with a mental health professional or trained volunteer, you can call our office numbers (330-921-8308 or 330-787-9817) and your call will be automatically forwarded to Help Hotline. You can also reach Help Hotline by dialing **211, 330-747-2696 or 800-427-3606**.

Help Hotline cannot contact your psychotherapist out of our normal business hours and will not take messages for your therapist on your behalf. It is a support and crisis line only.

Help Hotline will take messages to cancel your appointment, but our 24-hour cancellation policy remains in effect for those therapists with missed appointment policies. We do, however appreciate your effort to let us know you won't be coming to your appointment.

Help Hotline cannot make, change or verify appointments. You must call the Pathways office between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM on normal business days to make or change appointments.

#### ***Direct Contact with your Psychotherapist***

Our psychotherapists each set their own policies on contact with their clients outside of scheduled sessions. Please speak directly to your psychotherapist about her policy.

If you have a genuine need to speak to your psychotherapist outside of your scheduled sessions, call or leave a message for our office staff during regular business hours. Our psychotherapists set their own schedules and as a rule are not available every business

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Office staff WILL NOT contact your psychotherapist on a day he/she is not working for Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, *so there is no guarantee as to when your therapist will be able to return your call in a timely manner.*

***Telephone Calls with your Therapist***

In general, our psychotherapists do not offer telephone counseling but if your situation merits a telephone conversation of more than a few minutes, you may be charged a fee for a phone conversation (see fee schedule). Be aware a progress note will be generated by your therapist for your case file. If you have a need to speak with your psychotherapist at length, your psychotherapist will meet with you at the Pathways office as soon as his/her schedule allows.

***SMS/Texting***

**NEVER send SMS/Text messages to our office if you are in an emergency/crisis situation.**

Many clients prefer the convenience of using SMS (Mobile Phone Text Messaging) for reminder notification or communicating with the administrative office. Our reminder messages do not mention Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, but do reference an appointment. Example: "This is reminder of your appointment with Susan, tomorrow at 4:00 PM".

You may send a text to the office number to cancel the appointment referenced in the SMS message. It is not necessary to confirm your appointment if you intend to keep it. If your response is more complicated than a note to cancel, you are strongly encouraged not to reply via SMS, but by calling the office staff. A telephone call is less likely to compromise your privacy than a series of text messages.

It is very important to *remember that any communication via text can become part of your permanent file at Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC.*

If you choose to communicate with the organization by text, be aware that all text messages are retained in the logs of your and our service provider. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of both your and our service providers.

If the office is closed when you send your text, your correspondence will not be reviewed by the office staff until the next business day.

***EMAIL***

**NEVER send email messages to our office if you are in an emergency/crisis situation**

The organization prefers using email *only* to arrange or modify appointments and for general inquiries. Please do not email us content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential.

If you choose to communicate with the organization by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and our services providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of your and our Internet service providers.

You should also know that any emails we receive from you and any responses we send to you can become part of your file.

If the office is closed when you send your email, your correspondence will not be reviewed by the office staff until the next business day.

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET**

**The Internet**

***Our Website***

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You can access our website at <http://www.pathwaysofohiocounseling.com/> for information about office closings, service offerings and information about our staff. The website does offer a contact form. The entries into contact form is delivered to our office as email. Please be aware of the cautions in this document regarding email correspondence.

### ***Social Media Contact***

Some of our providers have personal social media pages on sites like Facebook and LinkedIn as well as personal web sites. If you come across a personal page or web site, please discuss this with your therapist.

### ***Facebook***

Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC maintains a Facebook Page that is updated from time to time with practice information. It is used for information purposes only.

You are welcome to view our Facebook Page at [www.facebook.com/PathwaysofOhioCounseling/](http://www.facebook.com/PathwaysofOhioCounseling/). If you do choose to like our page, be aware that liking us creates a greater likelihood of compromising your confidentiality. Also, most professional mental health organizations' ethical standards prohibit providers from soliciting testimonials from clients. We feel if you "like" our page your action may imply a request for public endorsement of our practice.

Do not use the messaging feature on Facebook to contact us. This site is not secure. Also, it is unlikely your message be read in a timely manner for an appropriate response. Do not use Wall postings, @ replies, or other means of engaging with the practice via Facebook. Engaging with the practice in this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your file and will need to be documented in your file.

### ***Twitter***

The practice does not have a Twitter Account. Some of our providers may have private accounts.

If your provider should notice that you have followed her on Twitter, your provider may briefly discuss this and its potential impact on your working relationship.

### ***Use of Search Engines***

The ethical standards of the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board and other governing bodies such as the National Association of Social Workers, strongly suggest licensed psychotherapy professionals do not perform searches for clients on the internet or social media sites. However, extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis.

If your provider has a reason to believe you are a danger to yourself or others and you have not been in touch with him/her via the usual means (upcoming appointments, telephone, or SMS) there may be an instance in which using a search engine or social media site to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates becomes necessary. *This is only the case if we are ensuring your welfare or the welfare of others.* These are very unusual situations and if we ever use this method, the incident will be fully documented in your chart and will be discussed with you when you next meet with your provider.

### ***Business Review Sites***

Most professional ethics codes for mental health professionals state that is unethical to solicit testimonials.

You may find Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Google Places, Bing or other pages that list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find our listing on any of these sites, please know that the listing is *not* a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as our client.

You have a right to express yourself on any site. Due to confidentiality, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether a comment is a positive or a negative. We urge you to take your privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to

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you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with our practice or to express your feelings about our work, there is almost no chance anyone from our organization will ever see your post.

We hope that you will bring your feelings and reactions to our work directly into the therapy process. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide you and your provider are not a good fit.

*None of this is meant to deter you from sharing you are in therapy with a provider in our organization wherever and with whomever you like.*

***Location-Based Services***

Be aware of potential privacy issues if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device. It is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to check-ins at our office on a regular basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally “checking in” from our office or if you have a passive LBS enabled on your phone.

***CONCLUSION***

If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures, or regarding our potential interactions via social media or the internet, bring them to the attention of your provider so that they can be discussed with you.