

# PATHWAYS OF OHIO COUNSELING SERVICES, LLC

## COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

JANUARY 2019

This document describes the boundaries of the relationships between Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC's client contact with their therapist and other members of the Pathways staff regarding personal, professional, social media and electronic communications.

### OUT OF SESSION CONTACT BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PSYCHOTHERAPIST

If you have a genuine need to contact your psychotherapist outside of your scheduled sessions, you may call or leave a message at our Administrative Office during regular business hours.

*There is no guarantee your provider will be able to return your call the day you make your request.* When your provider does return your call, you may be charged a fee for your therapist's time (see fee schedule).

### CONTACTING THE PATHWAYS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

The Pathways' office telephone numbers are:

**330-921-8308 or 330-787-9817**

The 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)**

The Pathways' office FAX number is:

**330-757-1166**

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Email and text messaging are NOT secure methods of communication.**

You may be risking your confidentiality if you choose to disclose specifics about the nature of your treatment if you use either email or text messaging to communicate with the Pathways office, so please use discretion when emailing or texting.

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We highly recommend the **only reason you use text and email** is to communicate information about appointment times, rescheduling or cancellations, etc.

Any information you relay to the Pathways' staff other than general correspondence about appointment dates, times, cancellations, etc., **will be noted in your client file and become part of your permanent medical record with Pathways.**

If you are sending a text or email message outside of regular office hours of 8:30 AM and 4:00 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays as noted on our web site, **the text or email will not be accessed or viewed until the next business day.**

### OUT-OF-SESSION CONTACT WITH YOUR PSYCHOTHERAPIST

As previously explained in the Adult Services Contract, the psychotherapists who work with Pathways are Independent Contractors (IC) and not regular employees. As ICs, each therapist has the option of setting her own work hours. None of the ICs work for Pathways in a traditional Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, 40-hour work week.

Because of their IC status, your therapist may not be immediately available to you by telephone or to meet with you except during your scheduled appointment.

**If you have a history of requiring frequent out-of-session contact with your therapist, Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC may not be a good fit to meet your needs.**

Our psychotherapists do not offer telephone counseling but will generally respond to your requests to speak to her on the telephone. If your situation merits a telephone conversation of more than a few minutes, you may be charged a fee for a phone conversation. **Your insurance company generally will not pay for this service.** You may receive a bill for this service and a progress note will be generated by your therapist for your case file.

The administrative staff **WILL NOT** contact your therapist on a day she is not working for Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, *so several days might pass before your psychotherapist receives your message and has an opportunity to call you back.* However, the administrative staff will make every effort to help you deal with

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your question or issue. If the administrative staff can't help you, they will ask the Pathways managing owner and clinical director, Rebecca Nelis, to become involved to help you.

Please reference our fee schedule for possible charges associated with out-of-session contact with any of Pathways' providers, including Ms. Nelis.

### SMS/Texting

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

Many clients prefer text messages for reminder notifications or communicating with the administrative office.

You may send a text to our 330-921-8308 office number to cancel or reschedule an appointment. If your text requires a response more complicated than a quick note, you are strongly encouraged not to text, but to call 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 medical 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 call logs of both your and our service provider.

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 or crisis.**

You may send an email to the Pathways email address to check on the time of an appointment, reschedule or cancel an appointment.

We prefer to use email *only* to arrange or modify appointments and for general inquiries. Please do not email us content related to your therapy sessions. **Our email address is not encrypted, and so not secure or confidential.**

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

If you choose to communicate with the organization by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of both your and our services providers.

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

### *Our Website*

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.**

### *Facebook*

**Do not use the messaging feature on Facebook to contact us. The site is not secure. Also, it is unlikely your message be read in a timely manner.**

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. DO NOT send messages through Facebook email or messaging.** The delivery system is not secure and is unlikely in the extreme your message will be reviewed in a timely manner. Similarly, do not use wall postings, or other means of engaging with the practice via Facebook. Engaging with the practice in this way might compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that, depending on the content of your post, these exchanges become a part of your permanent file.

You are welcome to view our Facebook Page at [www.facebook.com/PathwaysofOhioCounseling/](http://www.facebook.com/PathwaysofOhioCounseling/).

Be aware all direct page postings are blocked and all attempts to post to the page are monitored for appropriateness.

You are welcome to “Follow” and/or “Like” our page. However, if you “like” our page, you may compromise your confidentiality. Also, most professional mental health organizations’ ethical standards prohibit providers from soliciting testimonials from clients. It’s important to note that while we encourage you to view and enjoy

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our page, if you “like” or “follow” our page your action is not a request from Pathways for public endorsement of our practice.

### ***Social Media Contact with your Psychotherapist***

Professional codes of ethics prohibit a social media relationship with our clients.

Some of our therapists and administrative staff have personal social media pages on sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc., as well as personal web sites. If you come across one of our staff member’s personal social media pages, do NOT attempt to engage with the Pathways team member. Please discuss any additional questions you have about using social media with your therapist.

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

The ethical standards of the Board our providers are licensed by strongly suggest professionals under their jurisdiction do not perform searches on clients on the internet or social media sites. However, extremely rare exceptions may be made by your therapist during times of crisis.

If your provider or Pathways’ administration has a reason to believe you are a danger to yourself or others, we may use a search engine or social media site to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates.

*This is only the case if we are ensuring your welfare or the welfare of others.* 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 therapist.

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

*The following statements are not meant to deter you from sharing your experience with the Pathways organization wherever and with whomever you like.*

The ethics codes for mental health professionals state it is unethical to solicit testimonials from our clients about our services.

You have a right to express yourself on any review site; however, due to confidentiality constraints, we cannot respond to reviews on any of these sites whether a comment is a positive or a negative. Also, it is unlikely in the extreme anyone from Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services will ever see your comments.

### ***Location-Based Services***

Be aware of potential privacy issues if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device. It is possible that others who track you may surmise that you are a client due to check-ins at our office on a regular basis.

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### CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

If, while you are an active client of Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC and the organization deems significant changes to the information contained in this document to be necessary, you will find the changes clearly defined on our website, [www.pathwaysofohiocounselingservices.com](http://www.pathwaysofohiocounselingservices.com) 30 days in advance of the change.

If, while you are an active client of Pathways of Ohio Counseling Services, LLC and a user of our Client Portal, change notifications will be sent to you through the Portal 30 days in advance of the change in information.