



# Chrysostom Mental Health Services

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*The bee is more honored than other animals, not because it labors, but because it labors for others.*

*- St. John Chrysostom*

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## Information for Clients

February 19, 2017

# Information for Clients

Welcome to Chrysostom Mental Health Services (MHS). We appreciate you giving us the opportunity to work with you. We believe that when clients understand mental health services, counseling services, and their rights, they are more likely to make good progress. As a result, we have developed this document to increase your understanding and answer common questions about services. It is important that you read all of the information below. Please mark any portion that you do not understand or about which you have questions. During your initial face-to-face contact, this information and any questions you have will be discussed. You will then sign an Informed Consent to acknowledge that you've reviewed and understood all of the issues and points raised.

## Benefits and Risks

The decision to enter into services can be difficult. You may feel understandably nervous at the thought of sharing personal and sensitive information. In addition, you may not know what to expect with services. Therefore, it is important to understand the benefits and risks of services so that you can make informed choices about services. Hundreds of scientific studies have shown that services have many benefits, including:

- Opportunities for personal discovery, such as understanding strengths and weaknesses, capacities and limitations, areas for growth, underlying motivations for behavior, and other insights.
- Opportunities to resolve personal issues and resolve conflicts
- Improved interpersonal skills and more meaningful relationships.
- The remediation of uncomfortable, distressful, and problematic symptoms and behaviors.
- The ability to develop effective coping skills to better manage stress, giving you more time and energy to fully participate in life.
- Improved functioning in school, home, work, and other life areas.
- Increased self-confidence and self-efficacy.
- For marital and family counseling, the development of a more harmonious and happy home.
- For premarital counseling, a lesser likelihood of divorce.
- For assessment and evaluation, diagnosis; evaluation of treatment; estimation of prognosis; effective education, vocation, and rehabilitation planning; and positive resolution of legal issues.

Like other kinds of services, mental health services also have some risks to consider, including:

- Dealing with uncomfortable personal insights, memories, struggles, weaknesses, motivations, and constructive criticism.
- Contending with difficult feelings, such as fear, anxiety, sadness, guilt, anger, etc.

## ABOUT US

Chrysostom MHS is a private psychology practice owned by Dr. Jason B. Miller. Dr. Miller has 20 years of experience providing assessment, evaluation, therapy, and counseling. Dr. Miller integrates the art and science of psychology with the teachings and spirituality of the orthodox Christian faith. Numerous studies demonstrate that people who regularly attend religious services do better across a wide range of health indicators. Good faith and good science work together.



- Negative or inaccurate judgments of you by others because of stereotyping or social stigma for receiving mental health services.
- A temporary worsening of your issues, symptoms, or relationships at the beginning of treatment as you begin to face and/or confront painful feelings or situations.
- Lack of benefit from services in a way or pace that you had hoped.
- For marital and family counseling, the possibility of negative outcomes, especially if family secrets come to light.
- For marital, family, and group counseling, the possibility that others could disclose personal information without your permission.
- For assessment & evaluation, results that may be negative.

At Chrysostom, we believe in integrity, collaboration, and respect in all the services we provide. We're glad to speak with you further about the risks and benefits to help you arrive at a choice with which you are comfortable.

## How we work

At Chrysostom MHS, we use cognitive and behavioral methods for therapy and counseling services. These are straightforward, scientifically validated, and rational approaches that examine the relationship between our attitudes, beliefs, habits, and behaviors.

When clients indicate they would like to integrate the Christian faith into services, we may pray, examine our thoughts and behaviors with regard to the standards of Christian moral teaching, look to the wisdom of sacred scripture and the saints for guidance, utilize spiritual exercises handed down from sacred tradition, and encourage participation in the Sacraments/Mysteries. This is done with the purpose of strengthening and elevating us to a better life. Regular therapy and counseling are about reducing symptoms, making people more functional, or solving a problem. Christian oriented services are about going farther by transforming us into more holy and loving people. Some services at Chrysostom MHS have been specifically designated as ministerial services, which means that they are offered by Dr. Jason Miller for the sacramental/mystical life of Catholic and Orthodox Christians. These are marital, premarital, family counseling, clerical, sexual dysfunction remediation, and sexual addiction services.

For therapy and counseling, active participation means practicing skills or exercises at home, completing "homework" to deepen your learning, and other tasks. This is essential because you are only with the therapist/counselor for one hour a week. In order for you to make the best progress, you will have to generalize your experience in the session to the rest of the week. Homework and exercises are how this is done.

2 If you are seeking assessment and evaluation services through Chrysostom MHS, we utilize current, reliable, and valid instruments in order to obtain results that are meaningful and useful. In addition, we are sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and religious differences, and are aware of the mental

## REFERRALS

At Chrysostom MHS, we only practice within the scope of our competence and expertise. In addition, we want clients to have the best services for their situation. Therefore, we may recommend an evaluation by another professional, participation in an additional type of service, or direct you to someone else for services. If we refer you, we will always fully discuss with you our reasons why so that you can decide what's best. If you are receiving services with another related professional, we will coordinate with them upon your consent. Finally, you have the right to ask us about other treatments, receive a second opinion, or to receive services elsewhere. We will assist you in finding a qualified professional should you choose to do so.

health field's tendency to pathologize normalcy in these areas. Therefore we always strive to use tests and interpret results in a manner that is respectful of the client's background. Finally, assessments and evaluations are completed in a timely manner, so as not to delay needed results.

### Care Plans

For therapy and counseling clients, collaboration begins even before services do. At the end of your first session, after we've learned more about your situation, we'll let you know specifically how we think we can help and how often or how long we think you should be seen in order to achieve your goals. We'll also review any financial issues related to your insurance or other payment options. Working together, we'll create a customized, realistic, and achievable care plan that will direct and focus our efforts. As we move forward with the plan, we'll regularly look at our progress together and make any needed adjustments.

### Confidentiality

We at Chrysostom MHS treat confidentiality with great care as trust forms the backbone of effective mental health services. Legally and professionally, we cannot disclose information about clients without their expressed permission. Nonetheless, there are limits and legal exceptions to confidentiality. If you have any concerns and need special advice, we suggest you speak with a legal professional before proceeding with services.

When you or other persons are in physical danger, the law requires us to break confidentiality for safety reasons.

- If we come to believe that you are threatening serious harm to another person, we are required to try and protect that person. We may have to tell the person, police, or a hospital (so that we may hospitalize you).
- If you seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, we may have to call a hospital, family members, and/or others who can help protect you. If such a situation does come up, we will fully discuss the course of action with you before we do anything, unless there is a very strong reason not to.
- In an emergency where your life or health is in danger, and we cannot get your consent, we may give another professional some information to protect your life. We will try to get your permission first and we will discuss this with you as soon as possible afterwards.
- If we believe or suspect you are abusing (i.e., neglecting, hurting, sexually molesting) a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person, we must file a report with a state agency. We do not have any legal power to investigate the situation to find out all the facts. Rather, a county agency will investigate.
- In any of these situations, we would reveal only information needed to protect you or the other person.

In general, if you become involved in a court case or proceeding, you can prevent us from testifying in court about what you have told us. This is called "privilege," and it is your choice to allow or prevent us from testifying.

However, there are some situations where a judge or court may require us to testify:

- In child custody or adoption proceedings, where your fitness as a parent is questioned or in doubt.
- In cases where your emotional or mental condition is important information for a court's decision.
- During a malpractice case or an investigation of us by a professional group.
- In a civil commitment hearing to decide if you will be admitted to or continued in a psychiatric hospital.
- If you're seeing us for court-ordered evaluations or treatment. In this case, we must discuss confidentiality fully, as you don't have to disclose what you don't want the court to know.
- If you were sent to us for evaluation by worker's compensation, Social Security disability, immigration services, or another agency, we will send the final report to a representative of that agency and it can contain anything that you tell us.

Confidentiality with other professionals:

- We may sometimes consult with another professional about your case in order to provide the best quality services. If we seek consultation, we will conceal your identity. Furthermore, the other professional is also required by ethics to uphold confidentiality.

- When we are out of town or unavailable, another mental health professional will be available to help you. Therefore, we may provide that professional some information about you in order to best assist you.

Here is what you need to know about confidentiality with regard to insurance and money matters:

- If you use your health insurance to pay part of our fees, we will be required to provide the payer information, such as your functioning in many areas of your life, social and psychological history, current symptoms, care plan, and progress in therapy.
- It is illegal for insurers to release information about our office visits without your written permission. Although we believe the insurance company will act legally, we can't control who sees this information after it leaves our office. You can't be required to release more information just to get payments.
- If your account with us is unpaid and we haven't arranged a payment plan, we can use legal means (court, collection agency, lawyer) to obtain payment. The only information we will provide will be your name and address, the dates we met for professional services, and the amount due to us.
- In some situations, a court, agency, or employer refers you to us for services. The referring party may request information, such as your attendance, treatment progress, or completed evaluation. If another party has required your treatment or evaluation, please let us know immediately. Mandated services do not usually represent a legal exception to confidentiality, so you will need to sign a release of information in order for us to communicate about you. We will only reveal what is necessary to fulfill the mandate.

Confidentiality in working with children, groups, couples, and families

- We do not see children alone for therapy or counseling as we believe the best way to help them involves family. Therefore, the issue of limited privacy rights for adolescents is avoided by us working together.
- When a couple or family is seen for counseling, our relationship is with the whole couple or family, not individual members. If you disclose something "secret", whether via phone or in an individual session, we won't keep that information confidential from your partner or family members who attend, as secrets can disrupt counseling. We'll instead work with you to decide on the best way to handle the situation.
- If you are seeing us for marriage counseling, you must agree that if you decide to divorce, you will not request our testimony. Because of our commitment to orthodox Christianity, our duty is to prevent divorce due to its devastating moral, spiritual, psychological, and financial consequences. Similarly, we do not participate in custody disputes as they harm children. The court may nonetheless order us to testify.
- If you bring a child for services and that child is from a separated or divorce family, we require consent for services from both parents, regardless of the custody status, and prior to meeting with your child.
- In group therapy, other members of the group are not counselors and do not have legal or ethical mandates. You cannot be certain that they will always keep what you say in the group confidential. Nonetheless, there are rules that group members are expected to follow in order to protect confidentiality. Failure to respect these rules will result in termination from the group and could potentially result in legal action from the other group members.
  - No visitors, use of smartphones, cameras, or recording devices are allowed.
  - No information about other clients can be discussed outside of sessions, including their names.

Other points:

- We will not record our therapy sessions on audiotape or videotape without your written permission.
- If you want us to send information about our services to someone else, you must sign a "Request/Authorization to Release Confidential Records and Information" form.
- Any information that you tell us and also share outside of services, willingly and publicly, will not be considered protected or confidential by a court.
- We are required to keep records of your services, which you have a right to review with us. If something in the record might seriously upset you, we may leave it out, but we will fully explain to you our reasons for wanting to include. All records are kept within a secure place to maintain their confidentiality.

## Service Policies

When you first contact us for services, we will gather some basic information regarding you and the reason you are seeking services. If after discussing, we determine our services are appropriate for your needs, we will set an appointment date, time, and location. In addition, we will direct you to our website to fill out the required paperwork before we first meet. If this is an appointment for assessment and evaluation, we will provide an estimate of time so that we can plan the appointment(s) appropriately.

### *Therapy & Counseling Appointments*

During your first appointment, we will further discuss your reasons for seeking our services, as well as your needs and expectations. We will also go over the forms and documents you completed prior to our first contact in order to clarify any points and answer any questions you may have. We will then ask some questions about your history, develop the goals for your care plan, and discuss how therapy or counseling work. Because of this, the first session is approximately 1½ to 2 hours in length.

After our first session, we will schedule a regular appointment time and these typically last 45 to 50 minutes. We use the remaining 10 to 15 minutes of time in the hour for documentation. It is important that you come to each appointment in order to make the best progress. We will strive to accommodate your schedule as much as possible by offering a variety of session times. We will give you advance notice of any vacations or other absences that may occur during your regular appointment time and we ask that you please do the same.

### *Assessment & Evaluation Appointments*

The assessment and evaluation process can be a lengthy one, ranging from 3 to 8 hours of in-person work together. This can include a clinical interview, completion of questionnaires, and administration of tests. After completing our appointments, a number of days will be required for the examiner to complete the report and necessary paperwork. This process can include consultation with other professionals; review of relevant records; and scoring and interpreting tests. For an additional fee, a 24 hour turnaround is offered. Upon completion of the report and/or paperwork, you be offered a feedback session for the examiner to review the results of the examination and answer any questions. Note that if this examination is at the request of a third party (i.e., the courts, archdiocese, etc.), we may not be able to release the examination results or provide feedback to you.

### *Cancellation & Lateness*

Since we reserve your session specifically for you, it's difficult to fill the time without plenty of advanced notice. Therefore, if you must cancel or reschedule an appointment, please give as much notice as possible. Also, note that we require at least 24 hours advanced notice for cancelling and rescheduling appointments. If you cancel with less than 24 hours notice, you may be charged for the entire session. For assessment and evaluation, you will be charged for an additional hour beyond the initial retainer. If you are using your insurance, the missed session fee will be equal to the amount allowed by the insurance company. In addition, please note your insurance will not cover this charge, so you will be responsible for paying the entire fee.

In order to receive the full time we've allotted you, it is important that you arrive to your sessions on time. It is likely that we will have another appointment scheduled after yours, so we will need to end your appointment at your regularly scheduled time, regardless of when you arrive.

For assessments, should you miss two appointments, you may be placed on a standby appointment for your next appointment. As a standby client, you will be invited during the course of several other scheduled appointments. Should one of those appointments fail to show, then you will be seen.

### *Terminating Counseling & Therapy Services*

The frequency of sessions and length of services can vary widely depending on your situation, goals, availability, and preferences. However, counseling and therapy should rarely, if ever, go on perpetually. A healthy long-term support system is not the therapist, but rather friends, family members, coworkers, religious community, and more. Therefore, our services are offered only as long as you need them - no more, no less. Furthermore, we will collaboratively set a reasonable discharge date, which we can modify, as needed. Some treatments may involve "booster sessions" in which, after discharge, you meet with the therapist/counselor once a year or six months to ensure that new skills are maintained.

Stopping services should not be done casually, though either of us may decide to terminate if we believe it is in your best interest at that time. If you wish to stop services, we strongly recommend meeting for at least one more time in order to tie up any loose ends, connect you to any needed resources, and discuss any future needs. If you are in group therapy and decide not to continue, it is important that you discuss your reasons with the group and its leader(s), as your decision could have a substantial impact on the other members. As a result, it is important that you give at least two weeks notice to the group so that they can adjust to the transition. If you miss three or more appointments consecutively and we are unable to contact you, we may need to terminate your case.

### *In Case of Emergency*

As explained in the confidentiality section, if there is an emergency during the course of our time together or we become concerned about your personal safety, we may be required by law and the rules of our profession to contact the appropriate agency in order to attend to your needs. However, if there is an emergency outside of the session, it is important that you directly contact the appropriate agency in order to ensure rapid response. If you or anyone in your family is having a medical emergency, being assaulted, or being threatened, please call 911 immediately. If you or anyone in your family are feeling self-injurious, suicidal, or having a severe disturbance in thinking and functioning, please call your respective county mental health crisis team:

Ventura: 1(866)998-2243    Los Angeles: 1(800)-854-7771    Santa Barbara: 1(800)868-1649

## **Communications**

The other methods of communication we use outside of our session are phone, e-mail, fax, postal mail, and text messaging. Most of our discussions should take place during your appointments as they provide a safe and confidential space that is free of distractions and other intrusions. At times, however, phone and electronic contacts are necessary, especially when arranging appointments. Unusually frequent or lengthy phone contacts are considered an additional service that we would then need to bill you for, since it takes time that would ordinarily be spent serving other clients. If we feel this is the case, we will let you know beforehand so that you can make an informed decision regarding whether or not you would like to wait until your next appointment for a discussion.

During our initial session, you will sign a client confidentiality form and indicate your preferences for how we contact you. If you've given us permission to leave you a voicemail, e-mail, or text message, you will need to be responsible for monitoring who has access to those messages. We recommend you password protect your smart device to keep others from accessing your messages. If you choose to communicate by text or e-mail, we only do so for the purposes of request to return calls and appointment reminders, cancellations, and scheduling. We do not utilize social media for communications due to confidentiality reasons. We strive to be available to clients as much as possible and can usually return phone or "Please call" text messages within 1 business day.

## **Fees**

We ask our clients to please pay for each service at the time it is delivered, whether you're paying via insurance, an insurance copay, or paying for our full fee out-of-pocket. For assessment and evaluation services, a written estimate of time/cost will be provided and payment for that estimate will occur prior to conducting the services. We accept only checks and **do NOT accept cash**. Any alternative payment or fee arrangements must be worked out before the end of our first meeting. The fee schedule is listed below. While our fees are subject to change, we will always give you advanced notice of any changes so that we can address any concerns that you may have.

| Service                           | Fee  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Assessment & Evaluation           | \$150/hr. <sup>1,2,3</sup>   |
| Forensic & Psycholegal Evaluation | \$200/hr. <sup>1,2,3</sup>   |
| Court Testimony                   | \$200/hr. <sup>3</sup>   |
| Research & Evaluation             | \$100/hr.  |
| Individual Therapy                | \$150/hr. <sup>2,3</sup>   |
| Group Therapy                     | \$50/hr. <sup>2</sup>  |
| Additional Fees                   | <sup>1</sup> \$25 hr. for 24 hour turnaround <sup>2</sup> \$20/hr. for translation services<br><sup>3</sup> \$50/visit for field services outside of Ventura, Santa Paula, Fillmore, & Ojai Valley |

If you have any questions regarding your financial arrangements with us, please discuss them with us as soon as possible. We understand that financial issues can be complicated and we believe that direct and open communication with us regarding such matters is essential.

Because payments are due at the time of service, we do not normally send statements to clients. If you need a statement for tax or other purposes, we will provide you with one upon request. If you think you may have trouble paying for services, please discuss this with us as soon as you realize there may be a problem. We will also bring up the matter with you so that we can make every effort to arrive at a solution that doesn't disrupt your services. If you've accumulated a balance and we have been unable to agree on a payment arrangement, we may decide that it is in your best interest to refer you to services that are more affordable for you.

**Record Copying Costs**

As a consumer, you have the right to copy your records. One copy of each of the following is provided free of charge: signed consents, evaluations, and the Information for Clients (also available on the website) brochure. If you wish to have additional copies or copies of other documents in your clinical records, they are available at .25¢/page.

**Health Insurance**

Chrysostom accepts a wide range of insurance plans and is an out-of-network provider for your Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan. If you are using your PPO, please note that each insurance company has a rate that it pays providers, regardless of the rate we bill. You will be responsible for costs not covered by their rate. For example, if your PPO pays providers \$70/hr. and we charge \$100/hr., you would be responsible for the difference of \$30. If you decide to use your PPO, you will need to contact them regarding their reimbursement rate and necessary paperwork. You will pay for the total cost of services and subsequently seek reimbursement from your insurance company for the costs they cover. We will supply any necessary paperwork to facilitate your reimbursement.

In order for your insurance to help cover services, they must be considered "medically necessary," which means they must address a treatable psychiatric diagnosis of a particular severity level. As a result, your insurance company may ask us for information about you and your treatment to ensure medical necessity.

## Feedback and Complaints

We realize that challenges and problems can sometimes arise during the course of services. As mental health providers and ministers of the Christian faith, we value communication and service, always striving to be better at what we do. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with us immediately. We are committed to making every effort to hear your complaints and seek solutions to them.

As licensed psychologists, we fully abide by the rules and ethical principles of the California Board of Psychology. If you feel we've treated you unfairly or broken a professional rule during the course of **psychological** services, please tell us. You can also contact the California Board of Psychology to discuss your concerns or file a formal complaint.

As a Catholic ministry, we are also committed to fully abiding by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. If you feel that we've acted in a manner contrary to Christ and the teachings of His Church during the course of **ministerial** services, please tell us. You can also contact the parish at which we provided the service and/or the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to voice your concerns.

## Closing

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We believe that what you have learned will help make services more satisfying and successful. **If you feel all your questions have been answered and you are ready to proceed, please sign the completed "Consent for Services", which acknowledges your receipt and understanding of the information in this document, and provide the signed consent to Chrysostom MHS.** Furthermore, please retain a copy of this document for your records so that you will be able to refer to it later, if needed.