



Bren Shantz
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UnityCounselingGR.com

Welcome – I'm glad you're here.

Deciding to start the counseling process can be tough. This form contains information that is designed to answer basic questions about what counseling is and some things to be aware of. In the following pages, you will find information about the therapy process, how and when to contact me between sessions, insurance procedures and fees, my social media policy, confidentiality, laws about minors, and what to do if you have an ethical concern. Read this information carefully and please let me know if you have any questions.

Therapy Overview

I provide therapy services for adolescents and adults, meeting with clients most often in a one-on-one setting. At our first session, I will want to hear about the difficulties that led to you making an appointment and some general information about you and your current life situation. By the end of this first appointment, I will give you some initial recommendations on what I think will help and we will talk about some goals for therapy. Usually, this includes meeting for follow-up therapy sessions for a while, as it remains helpful for you.

As a therapist, my role is to provide a confidential and safe environment in which you experience empathy, authenticity, and respect. I use a variety of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional interventions that I rely on as they seem appropriate to your specific circumstances. I will look to utilize therapeutic approaches to help you toward your goals during sessions that generally meet weekly or biweekly and last from 45-60 minutes. When therapy is concluded is meant to be a mutual decision. We will periodically review your progress toward your goals and discuss how to know when therapy is nearing completion or whether new goals need to be added to the original plan. Sometimes people begin to schedule less frequently to gradually end therapy, while others feel ready to end therapy without a phasing out.

Therapy can be extremely helpful and fulfilling, and it takes work both in and out of sessions to be most effective. It requires active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change thoughts, emotional reactions and/or behaviors. There are benefits and risks to therapy. Potential benefits include increased healthy habits, improved communication and stability in relationships, and lessening of distress. Some potential risks include increased uncomfortable emotions as you self-explore, and changes in dynamics or communication with significant people in your life. Although there are many benefits to therapy, there is no guarantee of positive or intended results.



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Availability Between Sessions

If you need to contact me for scheduling purposes, I can be reached at (616) 439-1866. If I am in-session with another client or otherwise unavailable, you are invited to leave a voicemail. When you leave a message, include your telephone number even if you think I already have it, and best times to reach you. I make every effort to return calls in a timely manner, generally within 1 business days. You may also text me non-clinical information at this number or email me at brenshantz@outlook.com.

If you or someone you know needs help immediately:

- Call 911
- Go to the emergency room at the nearest hospital
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255

If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, contact one of the numbers above. Unity Counseling, LLC is not a crisis facility. However, if you are experiencing a *non*-life-threatening emergency and would like to check if appointments are available, please feel free to contact me.

Insurance and rates

Insurance coverages and processes can be confusing. As part of my normal process, I assist my clients by filing claims to your insurance company on your behalf. I will also work with you to identify your specific coverage benefits, including prior authorization, copay, coinsurance, deductible, or yearly session limits prior to your first appointment. Given that each individual insurance plan is different, it is important for you to notify me right away of any changes to your benefits. It is also important to know that you – not your insurance company – are ultimately responsible for the payment of the fee for therapy.

My current fees are as follows:

- Initial Intake Appointment: \$210.00
- Counseling Sessions: \$170.00
- Patients with insurance: the negotiated rate with each insurance company

For any cash payments including copays, coinsurances, deductibles, or fully cash pay clients, acceptable forms of payment include cash or check, and are due at time of service. Electronic or credit card payment may be available upon request. Cancellations or missed appointments without 24 hours notice will be subject to a \$50 fee charge.



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Social Media Policy

In order to maintain your confidentiality and my respective privacy, I am not able to interact with current or former clients on social networking websites. I am not able to accept friend or messages from current or former clients on any social networking sites including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

I will not solicit testimonials, ratings, or grades from clients on websites or through any means. I will not respond to testimonials, ratings or grades on websites either, whether positive or negative, in order to maintain your confidentiality. My hope is that you will bring concerns about our work together to the therapy session so we can address concerns directly.

Professional Records and Court Related Services

Both law and the standards of my profession require that I keep appropriate treatment records. If I receive a request for information about you, you must authorize in writing that you agree that the requested information released. I am not able to provide or perform evaluations for custody, visitation or other forensic matters.

Confidentiality

In general, law protects the confidentiality of all communications between a client and a mental health clinician, and I can only release information to others with your written permission. However, there are a number of exceptions, which are have indicated below. More information is provided about this in your HIPAA statement.

In judicial proceedings, if a judge orders the records released, I have to release the records. In addition, I am ethically and legally required to take action to protect others from harm even if taking this action means we reveal information about you. For example, if I believe a child, elderly person or disabled person is being abused or neglected, I am mandated to report this to the appropriate state agency. If I believe a client is threatening serious harm to another person or property, I must take protective action (through notifying the potential victim, the police, and/or facilitating hospitalization of my client). If I believe a client is a serious threat to harming him/ herself, I must take protective action (arranging hospitalization, contacting family/ significant others for notification, and/ or contacting the police). I would make reasonable effort to discuss any need to disclose confidential information about you, and I am happy to answer any questions you have about the exceptions to confidentiality.



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Minors

According to Michigan law (Mental Health Code, MCL 330.1707), minors 14 years of age or older may request outpatient mental health services from a mental health professional without the knowledge or consent of their parents/guardians. With few limitations, mental health professionals can provide these services for up to 12 sessions or four months (whichever comes first) without notifying parents. Situations where services cannot be provided without parental consent include (1) pregnancy termination referral services, (2) referral for psychiatric medications, or (3) inpatient hospitalization. If a minor 14 years of age or older requests services, the responsibility of payment falls to the minor and not the parents.

It is important to know that the rules and limitations of confidentiality apply. If a minor 14 years old or older seeks treatment on their own, a mental health professional cannot tell the parents or legal guardians what was said or even confirm the minor is a client unless the minor has given permission to do so or presents as an imminent risk of harm to self or others.

Minors who are 13 years old or younger are not able to authorize mental health counseling and are not guaranteed confidentiality from parents or legal guardians.

Complaints

If you have a concern or complaint about your treatment or care, please talk to me about it. I will take your criticism seriously, openly, and respond respectfully. The State of Michigan requires counselors to adhere to a specific Code of Conduct that is determined by the Board of Counseling. Should you wish to file a complaint, you may do so through:

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Enforcement Division, Allegation Section
P.O. Box 30670, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-9196

A Final Word

The counseling relationship is a very personal and individualized partnership. I want to know what you find helpful and what, if anything, may be getting in the way. I want you to feel free to share with me what I can do to help.