



NEW CLIENT WELCOME PACKET

Thank you for choosing Firm Foundations for your mental health care needs. This packet includes a copy of all treatment consents and policies you signed as a part of your new client paperwork. Please keep a copy for your records. This document can also be found on our website www.FirmFoundationsCounseling.com.

“Quality Mental Health Care for All”

Columbia

1021 Pinnacle Point Dr, Suite 120
Columbia, SC 29223
P: 803-722-4008
F: 803-403-8965

Lugoff

1441 Hwy 1 South
Lugoff, SC 29078
P: 803-708-0902
F: 803-403-8965



I've just started counseling, what should I expect next?

Welcome to the Firm Foundations practice. We are honored that you've chosen our team for your mental health care.

It is important that you know what to expect as you participate in the counseling process. The counseling process typically has four phases:

1. Assessment

We know that no two persons or families are the same. Thus, at the intake visit, we begin the counseling process with a diagnostic assessment to gain understanding of the presenting problem(s) and what results you want to achieve. This phase typically takes 1-3 sessions.

2. Establishing treatment goals and deciding on an evidenced based treatment

Once that assessment is complete, our therapist will review results with you, and, together, you will decide on the best course of treatment. Know that our clinician team is expert in treating anxiety; depressive; and trauma related disorders. Every clinician is trained in Evidenced Based Practices including but not limited to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; Trauma Focused Therapy; as well as Child/Adolescent & Family Therapy. The specific recommended treatment will be reviewed and explained to you during this phase. This phase usually takes 1-2 sessions.

3. Treatment

After you have agreed on treatment goals and approach, counseling treatment begins. We recommend that clients come a minimum of once per week for the first 4 weeks. Typically, we expect to see progress during those first four weeks of treatment, at that point, we will discuss decreasing the frequency of your appointments but will encourage you to see the treatment through to its completion (usually 8-12 sessions).

4. Progress maintenance and treatment end

As you progress towards your treatment goals and see desired changes in your life, you will begin to come to appointments less frequently. During this time, you and your counselor will work to maintain the positive gains and decide when the time is right to end treatment.

We look forward to serving you. We encourage you to check out our website www.FirmFoundationsCounseling.com. There you can read more about our clinical team, mission, and values.

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Effective: August 3rd, 2020

CANCELLATION POLICY

In order to provide the highest level of service availability, we ask that all clients cancel appointments with a minimum of 24 hours' notice.

After a ***first*** no show or late cancelled appointment, someone from our office will contact you to reschedule and/or confirm any future appointments.

After a ***second*** no show or late cancelled appointment, someone from our office will contact you to reschedule and/or confirm any future appointments and if no answer, all future appointments with us will be cancelled.

If you have any questions about this policy, please discuss with your clinician today.

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CRISIS & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A mental health crisis is a life-threatening situation in which an individual is exhibiting extreme emotional disturbance or behavioral distress, considering harm to self or others, disoriented or out of touch with reality, has a compromised ability to function, or is otherwise agitated and unable to be calmed.

Examples of a Mental Health Crisis include:

- Talking about suicide threats
- Talking about threatening behavior
- Self-injury, but not needing immediate medical attention
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Highly erratic or unusual behavior
- Eating disorders
- Not taking their prescribed psychiatric medications
- Emotionally distraught, very depressed, angry or anxious

If you cannot reach us immediately, or After Hours and Weekends

1. **Go to your local hospital emergency room for evaluation.**

*Please note that not all hospitals in our area have inpatient psychiatric services. The following hospitals DO offer inpatient psychiatric care:

Prisma Health

**Location: Taylor at Marion St.
Downtown Columbia
Phone: (803) 434-4813 option 3.**

Three Rivers Behavioral

**Location: 2900 Sunset Boulevard, West
Columbia, SC 29169
Phone: (866) 796-9911
Offer psychiatric assessments by
appointment until 10pm**

2. **Call 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (aka Mental Health 911)**

If you cannot transport yourself or have someone to transport you, call our local or national crisis line:

SC Department of Mental Health Crisis

**Location: Will dispatch to your location
Phone: **833-364-2274**
Offers services 24/7/365**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

**1-800-273-8255
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free**

3. Make client's therapist aware of the situation as soon as possible by calling Lugoff (803)708-0902 or Columbia office (803)722-4008.



Firm Foundations Counseling & Wellness, LLC

PLEASE KEEP THIS PACKET FOR YOUR RECORDS

**FIRM FOUNDATIONS COUNSELING & WELLNESS, LLC
HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Effective date: August 11, 2015

Firm Foundations Counseling & Wellness has been and will always be totally committed to maintaining clients' confidentiality. We will only release healthcare information about you in accordance with federal and state laws and ethics of the counseling profession.

This notice describes our policies related to the use and disclosure of your healthcare information.

Uses and disclosures of your health information for the purposes of providing services. Providing treatment services, collecting payment and conducting healthcare operations are necessary activities for quality care. State and federal laws allow us to use and disclose your health information for these purposes.

TREATMENT We may need to use or disclose health information about you to provide, manage or coordinate your care or related services. Which could include consultants and potential referral sources.

PAYMENT Information needed to verify insurance coverage and/or benefits with your insurance carrier, to process your claims as well as information needed for billing and collection purposes. We may bill the person in your family who pays for your insurance.

HEALTHCARE OPERATIONS We may need to use information about you to review our treatment procedures and business activity. Information may be used for certification, compliance and licensing activities.

Other uses or disclosures of your information which does not require your consent. There are some instances where we may be required to use and disclose information without your consent. For example, but not limited to: Information you and/or your child or children or vulnerable adult report about physical or sexual abuse: then by South Carolina State Law, we are obligated to report this to the Department of Social Services. If you provide information that informs us that you are in danger of harming yourself or others. Information to remind you of /or to reschedule appointments or treatment alternatives. Information shared with law enforcement if a crime is committed on our premises or against our staff or as required by law such as a subpoena or court order.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION We may need to send information about appointments, payment balances, etc. from time to time. Please indicate which methods of communication would you prefer? If you prefer we NOT contact via one of the methods below, please leave that line blank or write DO NOT CONTACT.



****IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR APPOINTMENTS****

Dear client,

Welcome to Firm Foundations! Whether you are an existing client for years or this is your first visit, I want you to know that we take great pride in serving your mental health care needs. It is important for you to understand how appointments work in a mental health practice as our appointment schedule works quite different from your typical doctor's office.

- First, each clinician has a certain number of appointments available each week.
- Of those appointments, only about 10% of those are after 5pm.
- We have an ongoing waitlist of people in the community who need to be seen by our clinicians.
- We do not ever double book appointments, thus if you do not show or late cancel your appointment, that appointment slot cannot be filled.
- An average appointment may last anywhere from 50-60 minutes. To maximize the quality of your session, it is important to arrive on time. If you are more than 15 minutes late, your appointment will need to be rescheduled.

New Clients

When we accept new clients, we make sure that the clinician can book regular appointments with you at the time of assessment (your first visit with us). Thus, at the first session your clinician will recommend you schedule appointments out for a certain number of visits (typically 6-8). By scheduling these regular appointments up front, you ensure that you get regular appointments with your clinician.

Existing Clients

If you are an existing clients and do not have regular appointments booked out with your clinician, they will be asking you today to do so.

What if I don't know my schedule or often have changes to my schedule?

We understand the demands of a busy schedule. Adults have work, kids have school, and sometimes life just happens. However, we cannot hold appointments open; the only way to ensure you have regular appointments with your clinician is to book them in advance. As long as you provide 24 hours' notice, you can cancel or change the appointment without penalty.

Waiting Area Policy

Here at Firm Foundations, we enjoy serving children and want them to feel welcomed. We also have a need to reduce loud noises in our waiting area so that clients can have a relaxed environment for their counseling session. If your child is upset, or playing loudly and being disruptive, we kindly ask you to take them outside for a moment until they are calm.



INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for choosing Firm Foundations Counseling and Wellness, LLC. Today's appointment will take approximately 45-50 minutes. We realize that starting counseling is a major decision and you may have many questions. This document is intended to inform you of our policies, State and Federal Laws, and your rights. If you have any other questions or concerns please ask and we will try our best to give you all the information you need. Our clinical team consists of Masters and Doctoral (PhD) level providers. All practitioners are licensed by the State of South Carolina. To report misconduct or mistreatment by any clinician, please contact The SC Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors at (803) 896-4658 or Contact.Counselor@llr.sc.gov or contact The SC Board of Social Work Examiners at (803) 896-4664 or llr.sc.gov. All clinicians utilize Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and incorporate other therapies as needed. For more information about your clinician's credentials visit www.FirmFoundationsCounseling.com. During today's appointment, your counselor will discuss with you treatment practices, philosophy, plan limitations and risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS: *Your verbal communication and clinical records are strictly confidential except for: a) information shared with our staff psychiatrist, b) information (diagnosis and dates of service) shared with your insurance company to process your claims, c) information you and/or you child or children or vulnerable adult report about physical or sexual abuse; then, by South Carolina State Law, we are obligated to report this to the Department of Social Services, d) where you sign a release of information to have specific information shared and e) if you provide information that informs me that you are in danger of harming yourself or others f) information necessary for case supervision or consultation and h) or when required by law. If an emergency situation for which the client or their guardian feels immediate attention is necessary, and the call is not returned within 15 minutes, the client or guardian understands that they are to contact the emergency services in the community (911) for those services. Firm Foundations Counseling & Wellness, LLC will follow those emergency services with standard counseling and support to the client or the client's family.*

THERAPIST/CLIENT RELATIONSHIP: *The relationship that exists between a client and their therapist is a professional relationship in which the counselor works alongside the client to make positive changes in the client's life. This relationship is the most important factor in the success of therapy. Thus, in addition to a client's right to confidentiality, there are boundaries that exist to protect that relationship. For example, a therapist must not enter a personal or sexual relationship with a client. Additionally, a therapist should not accept lavish gifts from a client (typically nothing more than \$10 in cost). Adhering to such boundaries enables the client to work towards their goals in an environment that is safe and warm. If at any time, you did not feel heard in a session, or believe the therapy approach is inappropriate, or just feel that something is missing in a session, PLEASE let your therapist or our director know.*



BENEFITS AND RISKS INVOLVED: *Benefits of therapy can include relief from symptoms (e.g. anxiety, depression, flashbacks, etc.); improved child behavior or academic performance; improved relationships and well as improvements in overall life satisfaction. For many clients, the benefits of therapy significantly outweigh any risks. However, some risks that can be associated with therapy include symptoms that worsen before they improve (e.g. when treating Posttraumatic Stress) or new behaviors that effect old relationships (e.g. you achieve sobriety but your partner does not). Despite potential for these risks, therapy has the potential to be a powerful and life changing experience. If you are regularly attending sessions, completing homework between sessions and you are not experiencing the change you desire, please let your therapist or our director know and we will discuss alternative treatment options.*

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS: *In the therapy process, it is often relevant to discuss and understand cultural factors and characteristics that make every individual and family unique. These may include - and are not limited to - gender, age, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social and economic status, spirituality, religious values, and other cultural factors. Exploring these factors helps not only in the development of a respectful therapist/client relationship, but it also allows the therapist to better understand the strengths and challenges of each individual and family.*

COORDINATION OF TREATMENT: *It is important that all health care providers work together. As such, we would like your permission to communicate with your primary care physician and/or psychiatrist. Your consent is valid for one year. **Please understand that you have the right to revoke this authorization, in writing, at any time by sending notice. However, a revocation is not valid to the extent that we have acted in reliance on such authorization.** If you prefer to decline consent no inform will be shared.*

FINANCIAL and CANCELLATION POLICY: *At this time we accept many major insurance plans and SC Medicaid. If you have not already; we will discuss your benefits and coverage as well as any amounts you may be responsible for.*

*In order to provide the highest level of service availability, we ask that all clients cancel appointments with a minimum of 24 hours' notice. After a **first** no show appointment, someone from our office will contact you to reschedule and/or confirm any future appointments. After a **second** no show **OR** same day cancellation, **all future appointments will be cancelled.** You may also be restricted to only scheduling one appointment at a time if there are more than **TWO** late cancellations **OR** no shows within a four appointment period.*

*An average appointment may last anywhere from 45-50 minutes. To maximize the quality of your session, it is important to arrive on time. **If you are more than 15 minutes late, your appointment will need to be rescheduled.***

*We sincerely appreciate your cooperation and at any time you have any questions regarding insurance, fees, balances or payments please feel free to ask. **You may have a copy of this form if requested.***



I have received a copy of my fee agreement and understand the no show/late cancellation policy as it is explained above.

CONSENT FOR TREATMENT OF CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS:

*I/We also understand that no minor child 16 and under may be left unattended.
Parents/Caregivers must stay on site when their minor child is in session.*