



**Counseling at St. John the Evangelist
Severna Park, Maryland**

Services Information for Clients

Welcome to St. John's Pastoral Counseling. Below is an introduction to our services, information on how counseling is provided, and useful guidelines on how to benefit from our services.

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Mission:

- Pastoral Counselors provide counseling for individuals, couples, and/or families to assist them with various issues that may be affecting their mental, emotional, relational, or spiritual wellbeing.

Our Services:

- Our counselors provide treatment that is consistent with sound psychological principles and the moral teachings and vision of the human person in the Roman Catholic Church.
- Notwithstanding our faith-based approach, we welcome clients of all faiths and backgrounds, and we provide all clients with impartial access to treatment, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, national origin, disability, handicap or otherwise.
- Clients who request that Catholic spirituality not be integrated with their personal treatment plan will be offered treatment based on sound psychological principles and Catholic moral principles. Clients who do not want their treatment to be informed by Catholic moral principles will be respectfully referred to a counselor elsewhere.
- Regardless of your background or beliefs, our counselors will:
 - Treat you with respect and dignity and will value you as a whole person.
 - Focus on you as an individual, couple or family, and implement a treatment plan that integrates sound psychological principles with Catholic moral and spiritual principles.
 - Where applicable, help you reconcile Catholic religious principles with your emotions, thoughts, experiences and behaviors.

- Encourage you to focus and engage in moral practices as defined by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

Our Counselors:

- Our counselors have a variety of educational backgrounds, training and experience, and we use a variety of theoretical orientations and interventions.
- Brief biographies of our counselors are available on the parish website.
- Every counselor is licensed in the State of Maryland, except for graduate students or recently graduated counselors who are not yet licensed. These trainees and unlicensed counselors are supervised by a licensed counselor according to the state regulations governing their discipline. If applicable, we will discuss this arrangement with clients before counseling is initiated, in which case your counselor will tell you about the nature of their supervision, and provide the contact information of their supervisor.
- The counselors operate independently and are not employees of St. John the Evangelist Parish or the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The Counseling Process:

Counseling is a collaborative process in which you and your counselor develop treatment goals and then work together to achieve those goals using evidence based practices.

- Initial Screening:
A counselor typically provides screening and triage by phone prior to your intake to determine what your needs are, match you with the best counselor based on those needs and counselor availability, orient you to our ministry, discuss fees, identify emergency contacts, etc. We then ask you to review our policies and practices, and complete a number of forms on our electronic health record portal.
- Evaluation & Treatment Planning:
Your counselor will conduct a comprehensive evaluation at your initial visit. Your counselor will also discuss what to expect during counseling, including the type of counseling, the length of treatment, and the risks and benefits. The evaluation will help your counselor develop an individualized treatment plan focused on your specific needs, your short-term and long-term goals, the steps you will take to achieve them, financial situation, and availability. We encourage you to take an active and informed role in developing your treatment plan. Over time, you and your counselor may update your treatment plan based on your progress to ensure that it accurately describes your goals and the steps you need to take.
- Counseling Sessions:
After intake, you will attend regular counseling sessions face-to-face at your counselor's office or remotely through telehealth. Counseling sessions are typically 45-50 minutes in length. With couples counseling or family counseling, the couple or family unit will be the focus of treatment, not any one individual within the couple or family.
- Termination:
Participation in counseling is voluntary; you can stop at any time. Counseling is typically ended after a discussion between the counselor and the client, when treatment goals have been

achieved, and clients no longer need services, or when clients withdraw from treatment for other reasons.

Telehealth Services:

Sessions may be conducted face-to-face or virtually, depending on the preferences of the client. Virtual sessions are conducted by telehealth through a secure platform designed for this purpose.

- **Requirements:** To use telehealth, you need an internet connection and a device with a camera for video. Your counselor can explain how to log in and use any features on the telehealth platform. There are some risks and benefits to using telehealth.
- **Risks:**
 - Privacy and Confidentiality. You may be asked to share personal information with the telehealth platform to create an account, such as your name, date of birth, location, and contact information. The information you provide will remain secure.
 - Technology. At times, you could have problems with your internet, video, or sound. If you are unable to establish a good connection, the session could be conducted by telephone.
 - Crisis Management. It may be difficult for your counselor to provide immediate support during an emergency or crisis. You and your counselor will develop a plan for emergencies or crises, such as choosing a local emergency contact, creating a communication plan, and making a list of local support, emergency, and crisis services.
- **Benefits:**
 - Flexibility. You can attend counseling wherever is convenient for you.
 - Convenience. You can attend telehealth sessions without traveling so sessions take less time out of your schedule. You can also attend counseling during inclement weather or illness.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Make sure that other people cannot hear your conversation or see your screen during sessions.
 - Make sure to let your counselor know if you are not in your usual location before starting any telehealth session.
 - Do not use video or audio to record your session unless you ask your counselor for their permission in advance.

Communication with your Counselor:

You decide how to communicate with your counselor outside of your sessions. You have several options:

- **Texting/E-mail.** Texting and e-mail are not secure methods of communication and should not be used to communicate personal information. However, you may choose to receive appointment reminders via text message or e-mail. You should carefully consider who may have access to your text messages or e-mails before choosing to communicate via either method.
- **Secure Communication.** Secure communications are the best way to communicate personal information, though no method is entirely without risk. Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

provide a means for secure communication, and you should use an EHR to send any personal information. You will receive guidance on how to use an EHR.

- **Social Media/Review Websites:**
 - If clients try to communicate with counselors via these methods, they will not respond. This is to protect your confidentiality and ensure appropriate boundaries in counseling.
 - Counselors may publish content on various social media websites or blogs. There is no expectation that you will follow, comment on, or otherwise engage with any content. If you do choose to follow your counselor on any platform, they will not follow you back.
 - If you see your counselor on any form of review website, it is not a solicitation for a review. If you choose to leave a review of your counselor on any website, they will not respond. While you are always free to express yourself in the manner you choose, please be aware of the potential impact on your confidentiality prior to leaving a review. It is often impossible to remove reviews later, and some sites aggregate reviews from several platforms leading to your review appearing in other places without your knowledge.

Emergency and Urgent Situations:

- In the event of a life-threatening emergency, clients should call 911 or go directly to the nearest emergency room or urgent care center. Clients should not try to contact their counselor instead of calling 911 or seeking emergency medical attention.
- In the event of urgent, but non-life-threatening matters, clients should try to contact their counselor. In the event the counselor is not able to take the call, leave a detailed message, including a callback telephone number. The counselor will return the call as soon as possible.