Professional Counseling:

Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. Often, client concerns include family or other relationship matters, grief and stress. In some cases, concerns may be specific to a mental illness.

Client Rights:

Seeking and selecting a counselor can be an intimidating process. As a client, you have the right to:

- Select a professional counselor who meets your needs.
- Receive specific information about your counselor’s qualifications, including education, experience, national counseling certifications and state licensure.
- Obtain a copy of the code(s) of ethics your counselor must follow.
- Receive an explanation of services offered, time commitments, fee scales and billing policies prior to receipt of services.
- Understand the limitations of your counselor’s areas of expertise and scope of practice (e.g., career development, adolescents, couples, etc.).
- Learn about confidentiality and its limits as specified in state laws and professional ethical codes.
- Receive information about emergency procedures (e.g., how to contact your counselor in the event of a crisis).
- Ask questions about counseling techniques and strategies, including potential risks and benefits.
- Participate in the establishment of goals and the evaluation of progress.
- Request additional opinions from other mental health assessment professionals.
- Understand the implications of diagnosis and the intended use of psychological reports.
- Obtain copies of records and reports.
- Terminate the counseling relationship at any time.
- Share any concerns or complaints you may have regarding a professional counselor’s conduct with the appropriate professional counseling organization or licensure board.

Professional Counseling: Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. Often, client concerns include family or other relationship matters, grief and stress. In some cases, concerns may be specific to a mental illness.

Client Responsibilities:

In order for your counselor to provide the highest quality of services, it is important that clients:

- Adhere to established schedules. If you must miss an appointment, contact your counselor as soon as possible.
- Abide by billing agreements.
- Follow agreed upon goals and strategies established in sessions.
- Inform your professional counselor of your progress in meeting your goals.
- Participate fully in each session to help maximize a positive outcome.
- Inform your counselor if you are receiving mental health services from another professional.
- Consider appropriate referrals from your counselor.
- Avoid placing your counselor in ethical dilemmas, such as requesting to become involved in social interactions or to barter for services.

What to Do If You Are Dissatisfied:

Remember that a counselor who meets the needs of one person may not meet the needs of another. If you are dissatisfied with the services of your counselor:

- Express concerns directly to the counselor, if possible.
- Seek the advice of the counselor’s supervisor if the counselor is practicing in a setting where he or she receives direct supervision.
- Terminate the counseling relationship if the situation remains unresolved.
- Contact the appropriate state licensing board, national certification organization or professional association if you believe the counselor’s conduct to be unethical.

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) was founded in 1982 as an independent, not-for-profit credentialing organization. It is the nation’s premier certification board serving counselors who meet rigorous standards for the general and specialty practices of their profession. Counselors certified by NBCC must maintain their certification by adhering to a strict code of ethics and following continuing education procedures. In addition, NBCC provides the examinations used by states that regulate the practice of counseling. www.nbcc.org

Chi Sigma Iota International (CSI) is an academic and professional honor society that recognizes excellence among counseling students and professionals. It includes a worldwide network of individuals who have met rigid academic standards and achieved professional recognition through credentialing. www.csi-net.org

Chi Sigma Iota

Counselors: Professional counselors must successfully complete a graduate degree program in counseling that includes a practicum and clinical internship where skills and techniques are developed and honed under supervision.