

Welcome to Peaks Counseling, LLC

THIS IS A GUIDE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH INFORMATION YOU NEED TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE PRACTICES AT PEAKS COUNSELING, LLC

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide services for you and your family! We hope that this guide will provide helpful information for making an informed decision concerning our services. We strive to provide high quality services and hope you will feel free to ask questions about our experience and service provision at any time.

Initial Sessions

Your first appointment is referred to as a “New Client Appointment,” but also may be referred to as an initial assessment or an intake appointment. This appointment is scheduled with the purpose of sharing information about our practice as well as your reasons for seeking services. We waive the fee for this appointment as a way of acknowledging that this is an opportunity for you to decide if our practice is the best fit for you and your family’s needs

You will receive an email prior to your first appointment, welcoming you to the practice and providing some information about the office as well as directing you to the website. As part of the New Client Appointment, you will have paperwork to complete. The email you receive will have a link to the paperwork for you to print and complete. Please email or bring all forms to your first appointment.

Upon arriving at the office, please find a seat and make yourself comfortable. Water is available on a table in the waiting room. The restroom is located across the hallway in Suite 10. If you find that no one is available when you arrive, please know that the therapists and case managers are in session and will be with you at or around your appointment time.

Treatment

It is our goal to make your psychotherapy and case management experience effective and efficient. We will keep you informed of alternative options as we are aware of them and provide the necessary referrals. We expect and encourage you to obtain knowledge of the procedures, goals and possible side-effects of psychotherapy and case management services.

Psychotherapy and case management have been shown to be extremely beneficial for some people. Benefits of psychotherapy include the possibility of decreased depression or anxiety, the possibility of healthier relationships and the possibility of solutions to specific problems.

There are risks associated with engaging in psychotherapy and case management services as well as benefits. Risks associated with psychotherapy and case management services may include, but are not limited to: the experience of intense and unwanted feelings such as sadness, anger, fear, guilt or anxiety. It is important to remember that these feelings may be natural and normal and can be an important part of the therapy process. Other risks may include: recalling unpleasant life events, facing unpleasant thoughts or beliefs, increasing awareness of feelings, values, and experiences, and alterations of an individual's ability or desire to deal effectively within relationships. Major life decisions are often made with the assistance of psychotherapy and case management, including decisions involving separation within families, development of relationships, changing employment or changing lifestyles. As it is the process of psychotherapy and case management to reflect on beliefs and values, it will be natural for changes in your life to occur. Austin Smith, LCSW, is available to discuss any of your assumptions, problems or possible negative side effects of your work together.

Scheduling Appointments

Services are provided by appointment only. You can schedule, cancel, or reschedule appointments by calling or texting the office at **928-525-6352** or by emailing the Clinical Director at austinsmithlcsw@protonmail.com.

Individual therapy is generally scheduled for 45-50 minutes. Depending on the circumstances, individual appointments may also be scheduled for 20 minutes or 75 minutes. Family therapy sessions are generally scheduled for 50-60 minutes or as much as 75- 120 minutes, depending on the size and need of the family. When scheduling in-home appointments, you are responsible for making all preparations to ensure the safety of the environment, including restraining all pets and accounting for all persons present in the home. No weapons may be present during an in-home session. A specific location, such as dining room table or living room space should be set aside for the case management session. You are NOT expected to provide food, drink or any other gifts to the case manager when scheduling an in-home session. If scheduling an in-home session, you will need to make all necessary arrangements to protect the scheduled time and create an environment as free from interruptions as possible.

It is important to us to protect and reserve time for your appointment. As such, it is necessary that we charge for appointments that are not canceled at least 24 hours in advance of the appointment time. A reminder email will be sent approximately 24 hours in advance of your appointment to assist you with making any necessary adjustments. We understand that cancellations are sometimes necessary and will make every attempt to be flexible in rescheduling your appointment. In cases of emergency, please provide reasonable proof of emergency and your cancellation fee will be waived. For a no-show you will be charged \$80. For a cancellation after the 24-hour mark in advance of your

appointment time, you will be charged \$50 barring extenuating circumstances which you can discuss with your provider.

If there are three consecutive late cancellations or missed appointments without 24-hour advanced notice, the client's services will be suspended. It will be the client's responsibility to re-establish services with Peaks Counseling, if desired, and services will not continue until full payment for the missed appointments has been received.

Web-Based Services

Tele-health or web-based services are available via Simple Practice. While face-to-face sessions are generally considered preferable, you may find yourself in a situation in which web-based services are necessary. Please refer to the "Web-Based Tele-Health Services Additional Informed Consent and Agreement" document for further information related to accessing and receiving web-based services.

With respect to our commitment to professional boundaries, the providers will not engage in friendship, or activities that could be construed as friendships, on social media platforms.

Record Keeping

Arizona law and ethical practices require that we keep Protected Health Information about you and your family in your Clinical Record. Except in rare circumstances that involve danger to yourself and/or others, you may examine and/or request a copy of your Clinical Record at any time. Records requests must be made in writing and copying fees will apply. Please see the "Fee Arrangements" form for specific details. Because professional records can be misinterpreted or can be upsetting to untrained readers, you will need to review all requested records with your provider or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents.

Phone and Email

We are happy to take your call; however, you will notice that the office does not regularly have a receptionist. Therefore, many calls are forwarded to our confidential voicemail. Providers protect their time with you and other clients by not answering the phone during sessions. Please do not hesitate to leave a message as great care has been taken to ensure the privacy of our voicemail. Voicemail is only reviewed by our providers.

Phone messages left at the office phone **928-525-6352** are reviewed during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. Messages are reviewed throughout the day, between sessions, and all phone calls are returned within 48 business hours of the message.

Email is used for scheduling, paperwork and conveying non-life threatening information between sessions. Email should not be used as a substitute for conveying information during session. Your provider will address all information provided via email at the next scheduled session and will not engage in web-based services via email. Providers will check email once a day during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. Emails will be responded to within 48 hours of receipt.

In case of a life threatening emergency, do not wait for a return phone call or a return email. Please call 9-1-1 or proceed to your nearest emergency room.

Crisis and Emergency

Peaks Counseling is very concerned with the availability of support systems during a crisis or emergency. It is important that if you find yourself experiencing a crisis or an emergency that you seek help that is immediately available. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to make use of one or more of the many resources related to crisis intervention, including, but not limited to: going to your nearest Emergency Room, calling 9-1-1, calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255), or texting the Crisis Text Line at 741741. If you are located in Flagstaff, you may choose to call the Northern Arizona Crisis Line at (877) 756-4090, or access services at the Flagstaff Medical Center Emergency Department,

located at 1200 N. Beaver Street Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (928) 779-3366, services at The Guidance Center, located at 2187 N Vickey Street Flagstaff, AZ 86004 (928) 527-1899.

Termination

Termination of services may occur at any time, and may be initiated by the client or the therapist. Peaks Counseling requests that if a decision is being made to terminate, that there be a minimum of 7 days notice so that a final termination session(s) may be scheduled to ensure proper closure and explore reasons for termination. Termination is often a constructive and useful process. If referrals are necessary, they will be provided at that time.

Client Rights

Clients may question and/or refuse therapeutic procedures, or gain whatever information they wish to know about the process and course of therapy. Clients are provided with confidentiality under ethical standards as well as Arizona law. There are important and legally mandated exceptions to confidentiality, which include the following:

- Duty to Warn – The provider is obligated by law to notify a relevant other if it is deemed that a client has intent to harm another individual (ARS 32-3283).
- Child Abuse – The provider is obligated by law to report any incidents of suspected child abuse, neglect or abandonment in order to protect the children involved (ARS 13-3620.A).
- Elder Abuse – The provider is obligated by law to report any incidents of suspected elder or vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation (ARS 46-454).

- Self-Harm – The provider is obligated by law to notify any relevant individuals if it is deemed that a client has intent to take their own life in order to protect client safety.

Under circumstances in which there is legal or court involvement, client records or providers may be subpoenaed. We assure you that we will make every effort to maintain confidentiality except as noted above. There may be rare circumstances under which the provider may feel that confidentiality is destructive to the individual. Under such circumstances the client will be informed of the judgment and the client will have the final decision as to whether confidentiality is maintained.

Client rights will be discussed in detail at your New Client Appointment. Please direct all questions regarding your rights and confidentiality to your provider.

Dependent Clients

Parents and/or legal guardians of children or dependent adults should refer to the client rights outlined above. It is important that your child/dependent is able to completely trust their provider. As such, the information shared in session by your child/dependent is kept confidential. As the parent/legal guardian, you have the right and responsibility to question, understand and be informed of the therapeutic activities and progress of your child/dependent. Including parents/legal guardians in the therapeutic process is often beneficial and necessary. We will use various opportunities and methods to ensure that you are kept informed in a manner that does not undermine the integrity, quality and trust of the therapeutic relationship. This may include inviting the parent/legal guardian into the session as well as providing general progress updates. The provider will not hesitate to share with the parent/legal guardian anytime a provider is aware of a legal or safety issue that requires parental/legal guardian involvement.

Financial Arrangements

Charges for services are based on the usual, customary and reasonable fee profiles for Northern Arizona. Charges vary by provider and service provided. The “Fee Arrangement” form is available on the website at

www.peaks-counseling.com

and will be provided for signature at your New Client Appointment. This form includes fees associated with all potential services that may be provided. Please review this form in detail so that you are aware of all charged services. Fees are subject to change and such changes will be provided in writing prior to the change going into effect. Sliding scale fees are available based on client income and need. If you feel you may be eligible for a reduced fee, please complete the “Reduced Fee Eligibility” form and discuss your options with your provider.

Payment is expected at time of service. You are welcome to pay by cash, credit card or Venmo. If cash payments are made, please bring exact payment, as change is not available.

If paying by credit card, consider placing a card on file in Simple Practice to be billed at the end of each session. Unaccompanied minors and dependents attending session are required to provide payment at the time of service as well.

Peaks Counseling, LLC accepts Blue Cross Blue Shield, United Healthcare/UMR, and Aetna insurance plans. We will assist in verifying mental health benefits and coverage upon intake. If the client(s) insurance plan does not provide payment within 45 days of a rendered service, the client will be responsible to pay 50% of the contracted rate. (BCBS: \$47.94/session, United Healthcare/UMR: \$55.15/session, AETNA: \$52.36/session). The client is able to contact their insurance company to seek reimbursement for counseling services that the client paid for in the event that insurance did not provide payment to the provider.

If Peaks Counseling, LLC is unable to process a payment, the client will be responsible for providing an alternate method of payment (Updated Credit Card, HSA Card, Venmo, etc.). If

no alternate method of payment is provided then services will be paused until payment is received.

If you have a health insurance plan, your insurance company may reimburse for your visits. You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services and/or call the customer service number on the back of your insurance card. As health plans and reimbursement policies for outpatient mental and behavioral health services vary extensively, unless otherwise stated, we require full payment at the time of service. We will electronically file your insurance claim for you, and reimbursement will usually be made directly to the insured. Most insurance companies require diagnostic and treatment plan information prior to providing coverage or reimbursement. With your permission, we will release limited information related to those requests. If you decide for any reason to discontinue use of your insurance, you remain responsible for all fees associated with your treatment.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require provider participation, you will be expected to pay for all professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if the provider is called to testify by another party. Due to the difficulties associated with legal involvement, you will find that charges subsequent to legal proceedings are significantly increased and can be found on the "Fee Arrangement" form.

Austin Smith

Austin Smith, MSW, LCSW

Clinical Director and Owner of Peaks Counseling, LLC