

Horizons Family Counseling/City of Livermore Police Department

1110 South Livermore Avenue, Livermore, CA 94550

925-371-4747 *ph* / 925-371-4950 *fax* / www.cityoflivermore.net

Effective Date 8/8/2011

CONSUMER INFORMATION STATEMENT

Course of Treatment: Horizons Family Counseling (HFC) offers crisis intervention, family therapy, child therapy, parent therapy, group therapy, and psycho-educational workshops. Generally, counseling sessions are 50 minutes long and scheduled for up to 20 sessions. Options for additional counseling through HFC or a referral will be discussed with your therapist.

Consultation: Our clinical team of counselors and case manager(s) work together to provide the best possible service to you. At times we will consult with each other, or the Clinical Supervisor, about the families/individuals we are working with. The rules of confidentiality discussed in the Consumer Information statement apply to these discussions. At times we might find it helpful to consult with another professional outside of Horizons Family Counseling. During these consultations we would not reveal anything that would give information about your identity. If we want to go into more detail during such a consultation we would discuss this with you ahead of time and not proceed without your signed consent.

The Process of Therapy: Psychotherapy is often helpful to people who are experiencing some degree of emotional, mental, or psychological stress. The counseling process can assist you in clarifying goals and values, improving relationships, and in solving various other challenges and problems. Counseling involves your participation – in being open and honest, having a desire and hope to have things change, and following through on ideas and plans discussed. During the first few sessions we will explore what has brought you to counseling and assess if and how counseling might be helpful, as well as alternative treatment approaches. The process of therapy can involve some risks – at times difficult feelings and experiences may surface and bring on strong emotions. However, many people report that the outcome of therapy is worth the discomfort they may experience. Attempts to resolve problem areas of your life may affect other aspects/relationships in your life. If at any time you are not pleased with what is happening in counseling we encourage you to discuss it with the counselor. If it is determined that HFC services are not appropriate, or not of your choosing, we will work with you to find an appropriate referral.

Particular Points in Working with Individuals/Children/Families:

- When we see a child or teen (under age 18) in individual counseling the parents/guardians do have legal rights to access the clinical records. However, in order to make the therapy a safe place for your child to talk, it is our preference to only discuss general themes/summaries/updates of how the

therapy is progressing. If we believe that your child is engaging in ongoing behaviors which may cause serious physical or psychological harm we will be informing you, or working with your child to inform you.

- Our approach is to meet with the entire family, that is, those who live in the home. When appropriate, non custodial parents may be invited to participate. Our policy is to have both parents with legal custody consent to treatment. Appropriate releases will be signed. At times we will work with a family in combination – some family sessions, some parent sessions. Horizons has a “**no secrets**” policy. Parents are not to reveal information to the counselor that they do not want revealed to their children. We prefer to not receive information from one family member that is not to be told to another family member. If this situation arises we will use our discretion as to whether or not this information should be shared.
- Finally, it is important that all family members feel that therapy is a safe and trusting environment. We advise against using the therapy work as part of any child custody or divorce related legal proceeding.

Confidentiality: Information discussed in counseling sessions is confidential. Generally, it will be disclosed only with your written permission (for children under age 18 the consent is signed by the parent/guardian). However, disclosure is required by law 1) when there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse and/or neglect of a child, or an elder or a dependent adult; 2) when there is a reasonable suspicion that a client presents a danger of violence to others; or 3) when a client is likely to harm him/herself unless protective measures are taken. Counseling records may be subpoenaed as part of a legal proceeding, particularly if a client has raised the issue of his/her mental health. All subpoenas are reviewed by the City of Livermore Attorney’s Office.

Privacy of Records: Horizons maintains clinical files on all individuals/families seen through our counseling services. Files use a combination of paper and electronic formats. The paper portions of the files include intake and assessment forms, progress notes, signature documents, and correspondence, and are kept in locked file cabinets. Electronic portions of the file include demographic and statistical data, progress notes, and billing information. Clerical support will access the files *only* for the purposes of entering demographic information, compiling statistical reports, and processing billing. Our data base and city computer systems have extensive software and server/hardware security protections. Outside funding sources and third-party payers at times will audit services and records to see that we are compliant with billing procedures and standards of practice. The HFC Administrator and/or HFC Clinical Supervisor are present during such audits to see that privacy is maintained.

Messages and Emergencies; You can leave a message for your counselor on our main line **925-371-4747**. If you need to speak to somebody immediately during HFC business hours, call 925-371-4747; at other times you should call the Livermore Police Department at 925-371-4900, Valley Care Hospital at 925-373-4060 (Livermore) or 925-

847-3000 (Pleasanton), or your own Health Service Provider for an emergency appointment.

Fees: The fee for the 50-minute counseling session **begins at \$2.00**. Your co-payment is based on your financial resources according to the agency guidelines. Any balance remaining is subsidized through other funding sources. Fee adjustments do require proof of income and all changes in financial situations need to be reported to the therapist. Your co-payment is due and payable at the time of each session. Payments can be made with cash, bank check, money order, credit card (daytime business hours only), or personal checks. Checks are made payable to Horizons Family Counseling. There will be a \$25.00 service charge for checks returned from the bank, and your subsequent fee payments will need to be made with cash. You agree to pay the City of Livermore all reasonable costs of collection, plus attorney fees and court costs in the event any legal action is required to enforce collection.

Cancellations/Missed Appointments: You will be charged for missed appointments unless you provide notice 24 hours prior to your scheduled appointment time, or have a verifiable emergency. Counseling will be discontinued for clients who frequently miss sessions.

Insurance Reimbursement: Most medical insurance plans provide some coverage for counseling (often called "out patient mental health services"). Plans are very different. To see if your insurance will cover services received at Horizons, you need to contact the insurance company and see if you can choose your own provider, or if you need to go to somebody on their referral list. If you have medical insurance that will cover the counseling services at Horizons Family Counseling we can provide a receipt for payments made by you and you can seek reimbursement through your carrier. We **CAN NOT** bill your insurance provider directly. **You will remain responsible for any co-payment, deductible, and charges for missed sessions, or sessions where payment is not authorized by your insurance.** As part of the billing and authorization procedures with your insurance company, we will need to supply your carrier with the necessary medical information, including a mental health diagnosis, to process your claim.

Services Provided through Contract with Alameda County Juvenile Probation: If you are receiving services as part of this contract, City of Livermore Police Department Horizons Family Counseling will cooperate with reporting requirements established by the Alameda County Probation Department, including seeking appropriate releases to provided the name of the youth exhibiting 602 W&I (delinquent) or 601 W&I (truancy, runaway, beyond parental control) misconduct, the source of the referral (police, probation, school, parent, SARB, youth court), compliance with services assigned, outcomes, and impact.

Funding: We may need to use and disclose healthcare information about you for funding purposes. We may need to share identifying information about your child, including the dates and types of services received and improvements in risk factors and functioning, with the following entities: The Alameda County Probation Department, which provides funding for these services, and any other organization providing services to your child within the Delinquency Prevention/Early Intervention Network. The data will be used to improve case coordination and service delivery for your child. In addition, this data will help us improve and integrate services and systems for all at-risk youth in Alameda County. Our goal is to educate policy and decision-makers about the needs, service experiences and outcomes of youth and families served. Note, all records and evaluation reports produced will be kept confidential for research purposes only and will never include any names. All information shared will be kept strictly private, and safeguards will be followed to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, The Alameda County Probation Department and any other organization providing services to your child within the Delinquency Prevention/Early Intervention Network may require the release of school information records for your child.

Concerns About Services: If you have any questions or concerns about services, contact your counselor, or the Horizons Clinical Supervisor or HFC Administrator.