



### WELCOME!

Congratulations on taking a brave step toward healing! The following information is meant to help answer any administrative questions you may have about Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute or the services we offer. **If you have any questions about anything within this document, we encourage you to bring them up when we meet.**

### About Fuller Life Family Institute

Our mission is to provide quality counseling to ALL persons, with specific opportunity to assist the under-resourced or under-insured, and to fill a gap in the professional development of Marriage and Family Therapists and Counselors by creating a rigorous collaborative post-graduate fellowship program with an emphasis in faith-based training of Marriage and Family Therapists.

The Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute (FFTI) is a not-for-profit charitable organization with 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. We are grateful to the various individuals, churches, and organizations that partner with us in our dream of serving the people, children, and families in the Houston.

### Scheduling

Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute offers individual, marital & family therapy to adults, children, adolescents and families **by appointment only**. Sessions begin meeting weekly and generally last 45-50 minutes. Follow-up sessions are scheduled at the end of the session.

**To schedule an appointment please call Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute at (855) 245-LIFE (5433) or email [Info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org](mailto:Info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org).**

### Payment for Services

The client is responsible for payment of counseling and any other services utilized. **Payment is due in full at the time of service.** FLFT accepts checks, credit card or cash. There is a \$35 fee for returned checks.

A credit or debit card is required to be on file and will be electronically billed at the end of session unless the client indicates another preference for payment.

The session rate is determined prior to the first appointment. Fees are structured on a sliding scale based on income. Please notify your therapist if any problems arise during therapy regarding your ability to pay.

### Cancellation Policy

Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours' notice is required for re-scheduling or canceling an appointment. If you cannot keep your appointment, please notify your therapist or Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute as soon as possible at (855) 245-5433.

**The full fee is charged for no-shows or sessions not cancelled 24 hours in advance.**

### Location

Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute is in southwest Houston just inside Loop 610 on Bissonnet. Covered guest parking is available on the ground floor parking area. Additional parking is available to the right and left of the building.

If your appointment is after 6 pm, use the call box or phone to let your therapist know you are here. When you arrive, please be seated in the lobby and a therapist will be with you shortly.

4545 Bissonnet, Suite 289  
Bellaire, TX 77401  
(885) 245-LIFE (5433)

<http://fullerlifefamilytherapy.org/>  
[Info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org](mailto:Info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org)

### Referrals

Your referral to others is the highest compliment you can give. If you do suggest our services to friends or family members, we greatly appreciate it.

### Confidentiality

**Fuller Life Family Therapy upholds strict policies regarding confidentiality.** Please carefully review our notice of privacy practices for limits of confidentiality.

Due to confidentiality, **FLFT Therapists only see couples together in therapy.** Individuals participating in couple's therapy are not seen individually by the same therapist. When participating in couple's

therapy, please ensure any email correspondence with the therapist includes both partners in the email.

Our code of ethics grants confidentiality even to minors. Material discussed in therapy with children or adolescents will not be disclosed to parents. The therapist may share clinical opinions, discuss assessment and treatment goals or involve parents in treatment when appropriate.

## CONSULTATION and TRAINING

**Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute is a training institute.** Your therapist will consult regularly with the clinical supervisor and colleagues within FLFT regarding your clinical treatment. Each member of the FLFT team has committed to uphold the highest standard of care, ethics and confidentiality.

**To provide the highest quality of care and intensive therapy training, we utilize video for clinical supervision purposes.** Video is stored for less than 30 days and is kept on secure HIPAA-compliant servers.

## LEGAL CONCERNS:

All disputes arising out of, or in relation to counseling services shall first be referred to mediation, before, and as a pre-condition of, the initiation of arbitration. The mediator shall be a neutral third party.

Should the therapist receive a subpoena and need to appear in court, the client is responsible for the hourly fee including time on call and traveling.

## THE PROCESS OF THERAPY

Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits requires your active involvement, honesty, and openness.

Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships, may result in changes that were not originally intended. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. **There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.**

If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used during your therapy, their possible risks, your therapist's expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please discuss this with your therapist.

Your therapist provides neither custody evaluation recommendation nor medication or prescription recommendation nor legal advice, as these activities do not fall within her/his scope of practice.

## TERMINATION:

A therapist does not work with clients who, in his/her opinion, he/she cannot help. In such a case, if appropriate, you will be given referrals that you can contact.

A therapist has the right to refer to alternate organizations or therapists when appropriate and cease providing treatment. Here are some examples of client behavior that may result in a therapist terminating services:

- attending sessions under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- displaying or threatening violent tendencies
- non-professional sexual expression
- demonstrating non-compliant behaviors
- two consecutive no-shows

You have the right to terminate therapy at any time. Upon your request, your therapist will provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer.

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

**We do not accept friend requests from current or former clients on PERSONAL social networking sites,** such as Facebook or Twitter. Adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship.

For this same reason, we request clients not communicate with us via any interactive or social networking sites. These sites are not secure and we may not read these messages in a timely fashion. The best way to contact us between sessions is by phone.

We regularly write about relational or mental health on our professional blog on our website and curate great articles and resources we find on Scoopit! To get the most recent updates follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), or subscribe to our [newsletter or blog](#) on our website, our professional Facebook profile or on the communication preferences form.

**The most private way to stay connected with our online resources is through our newsletter.** We never share your information with a third party. We invite you to follow our Fuller Life twitter or Facebook profile or as these are professional profiles, however, please know doing so may compromise your own confidentiality.

## BUSINESS REVIEW SITES:

FLFT has a presence on sites such as Yelp, Google, Yahoo, etc. which list businesses and may include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Our listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement. Our professional Code of Ethics prohibits our soliciting testimonials from clients.

## CONTACTING US:

- ◆ By phone 855-245-LIFE (5433)
- ◆ Your therapists direct line (business card/web).
- ◆ By email: [info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org](mailto:info@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org) OR (therapistname)@fullerlifefamilytherapy.org
- ◆ Secure Fax: (832) 706-3829
- ◆ Secure form on [www.fullerlifefamilytherapy.org](http://www.fullerlifefamilytherapy.org)

We may not be able to respond to your messages and calls immediately. For voicemails and other non-emergent messages, you can expect a response within BUSINESS 1-3 days. We may occasionally reply more quickly, but this may not always be possible.

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY:

**It is important that we can communicate and keep the confidential space that is vital to therapy.** It may become useful during treatment to communicate by email, text message or other electronic methods of communication.

These methods are typically NOT confidential means of communication. If you use these methods to communicate with your therapist there is a reasonable chance that a third party may be able to intercept and eavesdrop on those messages.

The kinds of parties that may intercept these messages include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ People in your home or environments with access to your phone, computer, or devices
- ◆ Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with Fuller Life
- ◆ Third parties on the Internet, server administrators or others who monitor Internet traffic

If there are people in your life that you don't want to access these communications, please talk with your therapist about ways to keep your communications confidential.

FLFT uses only HIPAA-Compliant Secure forms of communication unless you indicate a desire to communicate in non-secure means. We offer encrypted email and a secure texting and fax platform with HIPAA-compliant Business Associates. While it cannot be guaranteed these services will

prevent 100% of confidentiality breaches, they are designed to ensure enhanced security.

## INDICATE YOUR CHOICES ON THE COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES FORM IN THE INITIAL PAPERWORK.

If you reach out to us via unencrypted email, we will honor your desire to communicate in this way as an informed client willing to take a risk with normal email.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT:

If you are ever experiencing an emergency, including a mental health crisis, please call and indicate the emergency clearly in your message. In the event of a psychiatric emergency: Dial 911, go to your local emergency room or request a Crisis Intervention Team at the MHMRA Neuropsychiatric Center by calling **713.970.7070**. **Please do not use texts, e-mail, voice mail, or faxes for emergencies.**

## EMAIL:

If you choose to authorize non-secure email with us, be aware that computers and unencrypted e-mail communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and compromise the privacy of such communication. E-mails are vulnerable to unauthorized access since servers or communication companies may have unlimited or direct access to all e-mails that go through them.

**We prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments.** Any email content to or from you related to your therapy becomes a part of your medical record.

## TEXT MESSAGES:

Unlike email, our text platform is through secure HIPAA-Compliant Services. However, **texting with our clients is limited to scheduling related items ONLY.** Please include your name if you do text us since we do not store client contact information in our devices. **Text messages are NOT designed for emergencies.**

## HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY POLICIES:

(EFFECTIVE 8-2017)

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PRIVATE HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI) ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU MAY ACCESS THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

This Notice is provided to you pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accessibility Act of 1996 (HIPAA). We are required to abide these policies until replaced or revised. We have the right to revise

our privacy policies for all records, including records kept before policy changes were made.

The contents of material disclosed to us in therapy sessions are covered by the law as private health information (PHI). We respect the privacy of the information you provide us, and abide by ethical and legal requirements of privacy of records.

**We will not release any information about a client without a signed release of information** for all adults involved in the therapy EXCEPT in certain emergency situations or exceptions in which client information can be disclosed without written consent by law. **How we may use or disclose your PHI without your written authorization:**

- ◆ For legal reasons: Under subpoena from a judge in criminal or federal matters, to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive or court order.
- ◆ For safety of our client or others: If there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent, or elder abuse or neglect health care professionals are required to report to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities.
- ◆ Safety of client or others: if a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or a grave disability, health care professionals are required to notify legal authorities and make reasonable attempts to notify the family of the client.
- ◆ For public health purposes: to provide information to state or federal public health authorities, to prevent or control disease, injury or disability; to report child abuse or neglect; report domestic violence; report to the Food and Drug Administration problems with products and reactions to medications; and report disease or infection exposure.
- ◆ For consultation purposes: As a training institute, we spend several hours together each week in clinical supervision with a sole purpose of enhancing therapeutic service and professional development. Additionally, we may consult with other professionals outside our organization, but will speak generally and not disclose any specific PHI identifying information.
- ◆ For administrative purposes: administrative staff and HIPAA business associates may have access to PHI for administrative purposes.
- ◆ For non-payment: if payment has not been made in a timely manner, collection agencies may be utilized in collecting unpaid debts.

- ◆ In the case of death or other limiting factor of a therapist, another member of the Fuller Life Team will properly dispose of client records and/or ensure continuance of care.
- ◆ For ethical reasons: Professional misconduct by a health care professional must be reported by other health care professionals and related records may be released to substantiate disciplinary concerns.

## **YOUR RIGHTS**

You have the right to request to review or receive your medical files. You may request a copy of your records in writing. Records for non-emancipated minors must be requested by their custodial parents or legal guardians. There is a charge for this service. All requests must be in writing.

- ◆ You have the right to cancel a release of information by providing us a written notice.
- ◆ You have the right to know what information in your record has been provided to whom.
- ◆ You have the right to restrict what information might be disclosed to others. However, if we do not agree with these restrictions, we are not bound to abide by them.
- ◆ You have the right to request that information about you be communicated by other means or to another location.
- ◆ You have the right to disagree with the medical records in our files and request that this information be changed. We may decline to change the information, but you have the right to make a statement to be placed in your file.

## **COMPLAINTS**

If you believe your rights have been violated or for questions regarding these policies contact our privacy officer:

*Margarita Castaneda, Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute, 4545 Bissonnet, Suite 289, Bellaire, TX 77401.*

Complaints may be filed with the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, the Texas State Board of Licensed Professional Counselors or the Texas State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy:

*Texas Department of State Health Services, Mail Code 1982, Austin Texas 78714-9347.*

We will not retaliate for any complaint made to the government about our privacy practices.