



Samaritan Counseling Center

FRESH AIRE SAMARTIAN COUNSELING CENTER

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

2011

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I. ABOUT THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

THIS HANDBOOK IS DESIGNED TO ACQUAINT YOU WITH THE FRESH AIRE SAMARITAN COUNSELING CENTER, HEREAFTER KNOWN AS "THE CENTER," AND PROVIDE YOU WITH INFORMATION ABOUT WORKING HERE. THE HANDBOOK IS NOT ALL INCLUSIVE, BUT SUMMARIZES CENTER GUIDELINES. THIS EDITION REPLACES ALL PREVIOUSLY ISSUED EDITIONS.

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT, EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED. EMPLOYEES HAVE THE RIGHT TO END THEIR WORK RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CENTER, WITH OR WITHOUT ADVANCE NOTICE OR CAUSE. THE CENTER HAS THE SAME RIGHT TO END ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMPLOYEE.

NO EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK CAN ANTICIPATE EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE OR QUESTION. AFTER READING THIS MANUAL, IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS PLEASE TALK WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. ALSO THE NEED MAY ARISE TO CHANGE THE GUIDELINES IN THE HANDBOOK. THE CENTER THEREFORE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET THEM OR TO CHANGE THEM WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

II. ABOUT FRESH AIRE SAMARITAN COUNSELING CENTER

Fresh Aire Samaritan Counseling Center offers a unique form of both psychological and spiritual assistance particularly for clients seeking or struggling with change. The focus is on more than just the symptoms and counselors offering advice and directions. Counselors also help clients recognize, explore, and address the dynamics underlying their distress. The concept is to help individuals and families experience healing, growth, and wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.

By creating an environment of safety where clients can feel heard, understood, and accepted, Fresh Aire offers a sanctuary of examining, healing, and moving through distress and pain. In this safe environment, clients are encouraged to recognize that distress in their lives doesn't have to be avoided or eliminated. Rather, distress can be an invitation for personal and relational growth as well as spiritual renewal and transformation.

We are affiliated with the Samaritan Institute. At present, there are over 471 centers in 30 states and Japan. To be accredited, we must meet Samaritan Institute standards for its organization, management, and clinical practices. These standards are nationally recognized by the American Medical Association, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, President's Commission on Mental Health, and the denominational offices of many religions.

We are accountable to a local board of directors made up of community leaders representing supporting congregations. Samaritan Centers endorse the belief that mind, body, and spirit are interrelated and that wholeness includes community involvement. Counselors are trained to help counselees build upon their own religious and spiritual strengths. They work within the context of the counselee's belief system, and do not impose their own theology on clients.

III. PERSONNEL GUIDELINES

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Center is dedicated to the principles of equal employment opportunity in any term, condition, or privilege of employment. We do not discriminate against applicants or employees on the basis of age, race, sex, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, or any other status protected by federal, state or local law.

The Center prohibits retaliation against an employee for filing a complaint under this policy or for assisting in a complaint investigation. If you perceive retaliation for making a complaint or your participation in an investigation, please follow the complaint procedure outlined below. The situation will be promptly investigated.

Harassment

The Center is committed to maintaining a positive working environment free of unlawful harassment and which is sensitive to the diversity of its employees. In doing so, the Center prohibits sexual harassment and harassment because of age, race, sex, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, or any other legally protected status.

Unlawful harassment includes verbal or physical conduct that has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Actions based on an individual's race, color, national origin, religion, disability, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Prohibited behavior includes but is not limited to the following:

- ❖ Written form such as cartoons, e-mail, posters, drawing, or photographs.
- ❖ Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, or jokes.
- ❖ Physical conduct such as assault, or blocking an individual's movements.

This policy applies to all employees including managers, supervisors, co-workers, and non-employees such as customers, clients, vendors, consultants, volunteers, etc.

Sexual Harassment

The Center strongly opposes sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- ❖ Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- ❖ Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment.
- ❖ Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

All employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and businesslike manner at all times. Inappropriate sexual conduct that could lead to a claim of sexual harassment is

expressly prohibited by this policy. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, sexually implicit or explicit communications whether in:

- ❖ Written form, such as cartoons, posters, calendars, notes, letters, e-mail.
- ❖ Verbal form, such as comments, jokes, foul or obscene language of a sexual nature, gossiping, or questions about another's sex life, or repeated unwanted requests for dates.
- ❖ Physical gestures and other nonverbal behavior, such as unwelcome touching, grabbing, fondling, kissing, massaging, and brushing up against another's body.

EEO/Harassment Complaint Procedure

If you believe there has been a violation of the EEO policy or harassment based on the protected classes outlined above, including sexual harassment, please use the following complaint procedure. The Samaritan Center expects employees to make a timely complaint to enable the Center to promptly investigate and correct any behavior that may be in violation of this policy.

Report the incident to the Executive Director who will promptly investigate the matter and take appropriate corrective action. Your complaint will be kept as confidential as practicable. If the issue cannot be resolved through the Executive Director, the matter will be brought "together" to the Chair of the Personnel Committee for resolution.

If the Samaritan Center determines that an employee's behavior is in violation of this policy, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the offending employee, up to and including termination of employment.

IV. EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS

Employees are classified as salaried exempt, salaried nonexempt, or hourly. *Salaried exempt* employees are those who hold executive, administrative, or professional positions and do not receive overtime payment. *Salaried nonexempt* or *hourly* employees include secretarial or clerical positions that are paid overtime for all hours worked over 40 hours in a work week.

Full-time employees are those who regularly work a minimum of 40 hours per week. *Part-time* employees regularly work less than 40 hours per week.

V. WORKING CONDITIONS

Normal Working Hours

Normal working hours at the Center are determined by the Board of Directors in consultation with the Executive Director. Employees are expected to work during these hours except when the demands of providing services and information require an irregular schedule. Part-time employees will have work hours as negotiated.

Lunch Breaks

Full-time employees have a non-paid 60-minute lunch break. Part-time employees will have a lunch break as negotiated.

Rest Breaks

Employees may take a morning and afternoon rest break not to exceed 15 minutes.

VI. COMPENSATION

Annual salaries, benefits, and hourly wages are set according to job responsibilities and experience. They are reviewed annually by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors or a committee appointed by the Board of Directors.

Pay Periods

The Center uses a semi-monthly pay period. Wages are paid on the last day of each month. If a payday falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, wages will be paid on the workday preceding the weekday or holiday. Benefit and other reimbursements are paid monthly.

Hourly employees must submit hours worked at the end of each week.

VII. BENEFITS

Eligibility

Regular salaried and hourly employees who work at least 40 hours per week may be eligible for the Center's current benefits program.

Vacation, Sick Days, Holidays, Bereavement/Jury Duty

Any time for vacation, sickness, holidays, or bereavement must be negotiated with the Executive Director. Should it be impossible to make the time up negotiated, the employee may be replaced.

Cafeteria Choices

Regular salaried and hourly employees working at least 20 hours per week are eligible to participate in the Center's cafeteria plan. These dollars allow for the purchase of tax-free benefits such as health insurance, disability insurance, and flexible spending accounts for medical expenses and dependent care.

Eligible employees may elect to reduce their compensation by a certain amount in order to make salary deferral contributions into a retirement or investment account of their choice.

Eligible employees must elect how their benefit allowances will be used in January of each year. Additional information regarding the cafeteria and 403b plans, along with the necessary forms, will be provided to eligible employees upon hire.

VIII. REPORTING INJURIES

If an employee is injured on the job, even slightly, he/she must immediately report this fact in writing to the Executive Director as soon as possible so that first aid or medical attention can be received. Prompt medical attention for work-related injuries is provided by a doctor. Failure to seek treatment from the designated physician may result in your becoming financially responsible for the medical care that is provided.

IX. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Requests for Leaves of Absence

Requests for unpaid leaves of absence must be made in writing and submitted to the Executive Director for consideration. Requests for an extension of a leave of absence must also be in writing and submitted to the Executive Director.

Medical Leave of Absence

Requests for medical leave without pay or benefits for an employee's illness, injury, or pregnancy disability may be considered for full time employees providing the request is accompanied by a statement from a physician recommending the leave. Such certification must include the start date and anticipated return date. It is the employee's responsibility to obtain approval for a medical leave from the Executive Director.

Employees who are on approved medical leave currently retain their eligibility to continue participation in the Center's benefit programs as long as the employee continues to pay the employee's portion of the premium.

Employees who are on approved medical leave may be reinstated to the same or a position of like status and pay if such a position is available and they are qualified. However the Center does not guarantee reinstatement of an employee to a former position.

Employees returning from medical leave are expected to provide their supervisor with a physician's statement attesting to the employee's fitness for work; at its option, the Center may require an examination by a Center-appointed physician.

Personal Leave of Absence

There may be a time that requires an employee's absence from work for non-medical, personal business. A personal leave of absence without pay or benefits may be granted for a stated period of time, not to exceed 90 days. Such leave may be requested from the president. Approval is based on the reason for the requested leave, length of leave desired, the department's workload, and the employee's work record and length of service.

X. RULES OF CONDUCT

Smoking

The Center wishes to provide a smoke-free environment for its employees. Employees and visitors are not allowed to smoke within the Center offices. Violation of this rule will not be tolerated.

Substance Abuse

It is against the policy of the Center for an employee to report to work under the influence or apparent influence or effects of drugs or alcohol, or to use such substances while at work. Violation of this policy, or any off-premises conduct or actions relating to them which, in the opinion of the Executive Director, discredit or tend to discredit the Center, its services, or its employees, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The only exception to this may occur during Center sponsored events at which alcohol may be served with the approval of the Executive Director.

Gift, Favors, and Loans

Employees are not permitted to accept gifts, favors, or loans, or any other preferred arrangements of personal benefit under any circumstances directly or indirectly involving a conflict of interest.

Personal Appearance and Conduct

It is expected that employees will present a well-groomed appearance at all times, and that dress will be appropriate for the position held. Employees will refrain from conduct which will reflect adversely on the reputation of the person and/or Center.

Attendance and Punctuality

Good attendance and punctuality are important at the Center and are considered conditions of employment. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will not be tolerated.

Failure to adhere to any of the preceding rules of conduct will result in documentation and disciplinary action up to and including termination.

XI. MISCELLANEOUS EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Professional Membership Allowance

The Center may pay for professional memberships and dues for employees working at least 20 hours per week. Memberships and dues must have a direct relationship to the employee's position at the Center and be approved in advance by the Executive Director.

XII. EMPLOYEE PROBLEM SOLVING

If an employee has a work-related problem, he or she is encouraged to discuss it with the Executive Director. Normally, this discussion should be held within three to five days of the incident, or on a timely basis. Discussion held in a timely manner will enhance our ability to resolve concerns while it is fresh in everyone's mind.

If the issue cannot be resolved through the Executive Director, the matter will be brought "together" to the Chair of the Personnel Committee for resolution.

XIII. DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE

Fresh Aire staff is expected to adhere to the standards of professional and clinical practice set forth by the Samaritan Institute (See appendix 1 for a listing of these standards.) Occasionally, performance or behavior falls short of standards and expectations. When this occurs, the Center believes in prompt and appropriate action. Such action is based on the seriousness of the situation and the employee's record. Disciplinary actions can range from formal discussion about the matter to immediate termination. Actions taken by management in an individual case should not be assumed to establish a precedent in other circumstances.

The Center is committed to providing the quality of care consistent with Samaritan Institute Accreditation Standards, with the mental health care professions, and with federal and state guidelines. Therefore, clinical staff members are expected to adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the professional organizations to which they belong and of the agencies that license or certify them. (See Appendix 2 for a list of websites for various agencies and licensing boards' ethical guidelines.)

XIV. RESIGNATIONS AND TERMINATIONS

Your employment with the Center is voluntarily entered into, and you are free to resign at any time. We hope that in the event of resignation, you will give the Center two week's written notice.

Similarly, the Center is free to conclude an employment relationship where it believes it is in the Center's best interests at any time. While we hope our relationship will be long and mutually beneficial, it should be recognized that neither you, nor we, have entered into any contract of employment, express or implied. Our relationship is and will always be one of voluntary employment "at will."

XV. STATEMENT OF NONCOMPETITION

All clients are Center clients, records are Center records, referrals are Center referrals, and fees are Center fees. Thus, the determination of how all of these matters are handled, once a therapist is terminate, begins with a common understanding that the fundamental relationship of the client is with the Center and that the employee has been a Center agent in the relationship. Whenever possible, at the point of termination by any staff therapist, both the therapist and the administration will make every attempt to help both his/her clients and referral sources shift their work and allegiance to another Center therapist.

XVI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK. I UNDERSTAND THAT I AM TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH ITS CONTENTS AS IT OUTLINES MY RESPONSIBILITIES, BENEFITS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDELINES.

I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT MY EMPLOYMENT IS TERMINABLE AT WILL, SO BOTH THE CENTER AND I REMAIN FREE TO END OUR WORK RELATIONSHIP AT ANY TIME WITH OR WITHOUT REASON. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THIS HANDBOOK REPRESENTS BRIEF SUMMARIES OF CENTER GUIDELINES WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. THIS HANDBOOK MAY NOT BE ALL-INCLUSIVE.

FINALLY, I UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING IN THIS HANDBOOK CREATES AN EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT BETWEEN THE CENTER AND ME.

Signature

Date

Print Name

APPENDIX 1

PROFESSIONAL AND CLINICAL STANDARDS

A. Standards of Professional Practice. These statements define the standards of professional practice that the Center expects of its clinical staff members.

1. *The Center is committed to providing the quality of care consistent with Samaritan Institute Accreditation Standards, with the mental health care professions, and with federal and state guidelines.*
2. *Clinical staff members adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the professional organizations to which they belong and of the agencies that license or certify them.*
3. *The Center hires staff members whose knowledge base, training, and certification/licensure are consistent with the modes of therapy that they perform in the Center; and staff members practice within the limits of their competence, experience, and licensure/certification.*
4. *The Center accurately represents to the public the qualifications, licenses, certifications, and competencies of its clinical staff members, and it refrains from unprofessional advertising practices.*
5. *Those providing clinical services seek the welfare of their clients irrespective of the person's race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or disability.*
6. *The Center is committed to making its services accessible to its clients in a timely fashion, and to providing referral information and recommendations of community resources to those the Center cannot serve, if this information is available.*
7. *The Center supports and enhances staff member performance through supervision and consultation, and encourages continuing education to update knowledge and skills.*
8. *Staff members familiarize themselves with community resources to facilitate referrals when needed.*
9. *Center therapists seek collaborative relations with community resource persons, particularly with parish clergy and mental health professionals.*
10. *Center therapists respond to emergencies in ways that are appropriate to the client's best interest, to the Center's capabilities, and in keeping with legal and mental health care industry requirements...*
11. *The Center maintains proper boundaries of confidentiality for all aspects of client referrals, treatment, and record keeping.*

B. Standards of Clinical Practice

In addition to the general ethical and professional guidelines stated above, the following standards apply specifically to clinical practice. Italicized text states the standard; the indented text that is not italicized comments on the standard. Specific policies, procedures, and topical statements found elsewhere in the Clinical Services Notebook show how these standards are implemented in the work of the Center.

1. *Staff members who provide services are guided by the Center's Clinical Policies and Procedures.*
2. *The Center adheres to a system of record keeping that is consistent with the standards of practice for psychotherapy and pastoral counseling, and with the requirements of the health care entities that pay for the treatment of clients who use Center services.*
3. *Supervision and consultation are required for all clinical work being done by the Center in keeping with the levels of experience and certification/licensure of individual staff members who provide these services. This includes specialized consultation from medical, psychological, and pastoral resource persons to enhance mind-body-spirit-community integration.*

The intent of this standard is to ensure to the public that all clinical services provided by the Center are held accountable to quality standards through direct and indirect oversight. It also specifies consultative input to support the holistic emphasis that Samaritan Centers hope to achieve.

4. *Clinical services and records are kept confidential in accordance with generally accepted professional standards and with state and federal guidelines. The rules of confidentiality also apply to crisis situations and referrals to other helpers.*
5. *The Center is guided by a fee system that includes a standard fee, fee adjustment procedures, fee subsidy arrangements when available, and fee setting and fee collection methods that make services as affordable and usable as possible. The Center's board of directors approves and annually reviews the fee system proposed by the staff.*

This standard commits the Center to a rational fee system that protects the public from arbitrary fee setting and collection and that protects the Center from fee arrangements it cannot afford.

6. *The Center provides coverage for client services when therapists are on leave, when therapists end employment at the Center, and when treatment decisions require transfer to other therapists.*

This standard addresses the issues of abandonment and of continuity of care.

7. *The Center requires all clinical staff members to refrain from dual relationships with clients or students that compromise the integrity of the helping relationship. Dual relationships are defined as mixing professional relationships that focus on the helping or teaching process with personal relationships that seek sexual or other exploitative relationships.*

This standard takes seriously the misuse of the power inherent in the relationships of therapists, supervisors, and consultants with their clients or students. Even when it is the client or student who initiates the dual relationship, this breach of professional boundaries is not tolerated by the Center. It is the professional who must recognize the problem and act appropriately.

8. *The Center adheres to the Professional Standards and Standards for Clinical Practice that conform to the ethical and practice guidelines of such organizations as the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers. Individual staff persons who are members of other professional associations adhere to the standards of those associations as well.*

APPENDIX 2

List of Ethical Guideline Websites by Licensing Board/Agency

American Psychological Association (APA)

<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

National Association of Social Workers

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs.code/code.asp>

American Assoc. Marriage and Family Therapists (AMFT)

http://www.aamft.org/imis15/Content/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx

American Association Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)

<http://www1.aapc.com/aboutus/code-of-ethics.aspx>

National Board Certified Counselors (NBCC)

<http://www.nbcc.org/Assets/Ethics/nbcc-codeofethics.pdf>