

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. How much does counseling cost?

A session of counseling, whether for an individual, a couple, or a family costs \$85. You may be eligible to receive services at a reduced fee, that is, to have your sessions subsidized by funding from the United Way. To be eligible for a reduced fee, you must be able to prove that your family income is less than \$80,000 per year. Your fee will be reduced based on your total family income and number of dependents. Your actual fee could be as low as \$20 or as high as \$75. You can get an estimate of your fee by calling our **Appointment Services (713-861-4849)**. They will give you an estimate based on your report of family income. The exact amount will be based on your verified family income.

2. What do you accept as proof of family income?

You can use a recent pay stub or your latest tax return to verify family income. We do not retain these documents, but return them to you immediately after verification.

3. What if I have no income due to unemployment?

You will qualify for our minimum fee of \$20.00

4. What if I am temporarily living with my parents or other family members? Is their income included in “total family income”?

If you are an adult, only your income will be used to determine your fee if your living arrangements could be viewed as transitional. We have special funding to assist individuals in transitional housing, including half-way houses, shelters or other temporary housing arrangements. If you are still a dependent living in your parents' home, your fee will be based on your parent's income.

5. Do you accept insurance?

Currently, most insurance plans require that you see someone who is on their panel of providers. When you call Appointment Services, they can tell you if any of our counselors are approved by your insurance company. Verification of insurance coverage will typically require that we call your insurance company, as each plan may have a different set of providers. You should have your insurance card available when you call. It will have all the information we will need to verify coverage.

6. Do you accept Medicaid or Medicare?

Our licensed Social Workers can always see Medicare clients. However, individuals with Medicaid insurance are typically enrolled in HMOs, which like traditional insurance,

have an approved set of providers. When you call Appointment Services, they will be able to tell you whether we are providers under your HMO.

7. What kinds of problems are typically seen at Family Services?

Family Services typically focus on individuals, couples or families who are experiencing relationship issues, problems with depression, anxiety or loss, or simply looking for ways to improve their situation. Most people are seen in individual sessions, but many are seen in premarital counseling, marital counseling, or family counseling.

8. Are there problems that are too serious for Family Services to help?

Conditions that require crisis intervention, medication management, or psychiatric supervision are not appropriate for the level of care provided by Family Services. Individuals with severe or chronic mental illness can be seen at Family Services only if they are receiving concurrent psychiatric services and medication management at another setting. Since psychiatric services often do not provide one-on-one counseling, Family Services can provide an important service as part of the continuum of care once the medical/psychiatric aspects of the condition have been stabilized.

9. Who provides the counseling services?

Family Services employs masters' level counselors from the fields of counseling, psychology, social work and marriage and family. All of the counselors are licensed by the State of Texas and are under the supervision of the Vice President of Clinical Services.

10. Do you provide services in Spanish?

Counseling services in Spanish are available at our Central Houston location. We have three bilingual counselors serving at that location.

11. What is the theoretical orientation of the counselors at Family Services?

The counselors are trained in a solution-oriented approach, which means that progress is made by identifying and activating the client's strengths rather than by identifying and remedying the client's weaknesses. While it may make sense to help someone by pointing out their problems, in practice, the more people focus on their problems, the bigger their problems become. Fortunately, the same is true of focusing on strengths. The more people focus on their abilities, the more able they become.

12. How long does it take to see results?

Typically, clients experience improvement after just the first session. Because the focus is on discovering the client's strengths, clients typically leave the first session feeling at least a bit more hopeful and better able to deal with their problems. Typically, clients use

4 to 5 sessions before returning to their normal support system. One of the core beliefs of a solution-oriented approach is that people should be encouraged to use their own resources rather than develop long term dependencies on professionals. Your counselor will encourage you to try things on your own as soon as you both think it may be appropriate.

13. Can such brief therapy really resolve my problems?

The goal of solution-oriented counseling is not to resolve problems, but to empower you to resolve your own problems. Once you have the tools you need, you can stop coming to counseling and focus on changing your own situation. If you find you need more help, you can always return for additional sessions. Many clients use counseling the way they use primary medicine: they come only when they need help and only to get what they need to solve their problem. No one goes to a doctor every week for months or years. When new problems arise, they call for an appointment.

14. What if I have a problem that I know will take long term treatment?

A minority of clients at Family Services are in long term treatment. If that is what is best for you, you will have that option.

15. I am interested in marital counseling, but my husband is not. Can you help me in that situation?

Yes. While marital therapy is best done as a couple, sometimes that is not possible. If not, you can always come in alone and discuss your situation. Your counselor can help you decide what options you may have to improve the relationship just by changing your contribution to the relationship. Solution-oriented counseling assumes that relationships are systems susceptible to changes by either partner. A grumpy spouse usually creates a grumpy relationship. The reverse can sometimes be true.

16. I'm in a battering relationship. Can we come in for marital therapy?

Unfortunately, marital therapy can put the battered spouse in a precarious situation. The more open she or he is about the abuse, the more likely she or he will be abused as a consequence. For this reason, we do not encourage marital counseling for couples engaged in battering. Individual therapy is a safer alternative, along with referrals to specialized services offered by the Houston Area Women's Center and others. We can also refer the battering partner to a treatment program for batterers.

17. I'm in a gay relationship. Do you provide counseling for gay, bisexual, lesbian, and transgender (GBLT) populations?

Yes. Family Services has a long tradition of working with the GBLT clients. The organization is encouraging of diversity among its clients as well as its staff. As an example, Family Services was among the first social service organizations to offer

domestic partner benefits to its employees and to provide counseling to persons dealing with HIV/AIDS.

18. Do you provide counseling for children?

As a family-focused organization, we see many children in the context of family therapy. However, we do not typically see children for individual counseling. We are focused on strengthening the ability of parents to help their children rather than helping children directly. We do that by assessing the interaction between parent and child and offering guidance to the parent or family as a whole. If the child is the identified client, it would probably be best to be seen by a counselor or agency that specializes in children, such as DePelchin Children's Center.

19. Do you counselor seniors?

Yes, we frequently see seniors, especially after a loss or a transition.

20. I am not sure that my problem would be appropriate for Family Services. Is there some one with whom I could discuss my problem without actually making an appointment?

Yes, when you call Appointment Services, ask for a consultation with the supervisor. She may have to call you back, but she will be able to spend some time with you on the phone to answer your questions. The supervisor is not a counselor, but she is familiar with our services and can assess the ability of our services to meet your need.

21. Do you offer group therapy?

We are not currently providing any group counseling.

22. I need to see a psychiatrist. Can you help me find one?

Family Services has a cooperative arrangement with the Montrose Clinic for psychiatric services. Any Family Service client can be seen without charge at the clinic by a psychiatric resident. Medication is available through a subsidized pharmacy located in the clinic.

23. I have transportation problems. Could I arrange for telephone interviews? How about home visits?

State and Federal law require that we have at least once face-to-face interview with all clients to gain informed consent and establish identity. Once that has been done, telephone interviews are an option if both the counselor and the client agree. Home visits are not possible except as prescribed by certain contracted services, such as HIV Counseling.

24. What is HIV Counseling?

Family Services has various State and Federal contracts to provide counseling to individuals who are either HIV positive, or who are impacted by someone who is HIV positive (usually a spouse, parent or child), and meet certain other eligibility requirements in terms of income, place of residence, and absence of insurance. The Appointment Services Staff can provide you with more information about the eligibility requirements.

25. What are Employee Assistance Program services?

Family Services provides counseling services for a number of corporate clients, such as the Houston Chronicle, the YMCA, and numerous national companies. Employees of these companies have counseling sessions available to them to help them deal with work-related stress, personal issues, or substance abuse problems. Family Services also sends counselors out to the workplace to deal with critical incidents, such as industrial accidents, injuries, deaths, assaults, or emergencies that disrupt the work environment. If you might be interested in having Family Services provide such services for your company, please contact Tim Louis, Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health Services at 713-802-7854 or at tlouis@familyservices.org

26. Do you offer evening or weekend services?

Every counselor offers at least one evening of appointments each week. Some offer more. Typically evening appointments are not available for the first appointment, but may be arranged after the initial appointment. Services are not available on the weekends.

27. I am having an extramarital affair. If I came in for counseling with my wife, could you keep my secret from my wife until I figure out whether this marriage can be saved?

Most information shared with your counselor is treated as confidential and may not be shared without your permission. However, your counselor will not do couples counseling if he or she knows you are keeping such an important secret from your spouse. When your spouse discovers your secret, she would feel the counselor had colluded with you to prevent her from making an informed decision about the relationship. You would feel the same in you were in her position. For that reason, it would be best for you to try individual counseling to help you make a decision about your relationship(s) before attempting marital counseling. If your wife wants to enter counseling as well, it should not be with your therapist. Your spouse should have her own counselor so that your mutual confidentiality can be protected.