



## What training do Mental Health Professionals have?

It can be confusing to figure out what type of consultant may be best for your specific needs. The following outlines the most common credentials that consultants hold.

**MD in Psychiatry** A psychiatrist is a medical doctor and is able to prescribe medications. For example, medications such as antidepressants and anti-anxiety agents are sometimes found to be a very helpful adjunct to counseling. Not everyone who gets counseling needs to be on medication, but if medication is recommended, it is important to have a medical doctor who can monitor and work with you on the medications to make sure you are getting the most benefit possible from it.

**Psychologist** A Psychologist has a Ph.D. or Masters degree in psychology, and should be licensed in the state in which they are working. Psychologists have studied human interactions and behavior, and work with individuals, couples, or families to help understand and find solutions to problems. Psychologists with a Ph.D. are often called Doctors also, referring to the academic degree, not medical training.

**Consultant/Social Workers/Clinical Nurse Specialist** This group generally has a Masters degree in one of the helping fields. The overall training for these three groups is often similar. All groups of therapists are concerned with helping clients find ways to change or adapt certain patterns of thinking, interacting, or feeling that are not helpful by learning new, healthier ways of living life. Consultant (LPC), Social Workers (LCSW), and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) are also licensed by the state in which they work.

**Marriage and Family Therapists** These therapists have at least Masters' degree, and specialize in understanding the role that our family plays in who we are. Often they will work with several members of a family to help individuals within the family or the family as a whole improve communications and relationships.

**Your Faculty and Employee Assistance Program** is here to assist in selecting an appropriate resource for your specific needs. The FEAP consultant will meet with you at a conveniently scheduled time to assess the nature and depth of your situation and together with you will formulate a plan of action. The FEAP services are provided by your employer at no cost to you. If an outside resource is recommended, often much of the cost is covered under your medical insurance plan. Your consultant will assist in obtaining professional service at the lowest possible cost to you.

**Remember — all it takes is a phone call!**

## HOW DO I CONTACT FEAP?

**FEAP** can be reached by calling:

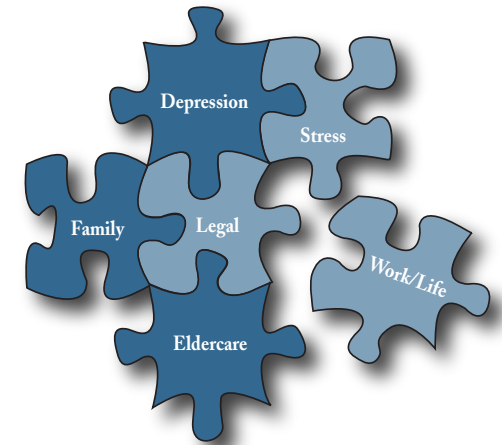
*telephone:* 434-243-2643

*toll free:* 800-847-9355

<http://www.uvafeap.com>

## COUNSELING

*What is it all About?*



## FACULTY *and* EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The University of Virginia  
The University of Virginia Health System



# WHAT IS COUNSELING ALL ABOUT?

The decision to seek help for a personal situation is a tough one. The whole idea of “talking to an outsider about my personal problems” can be a little scary. In order to make that decision easier, it may be helpful to understand what counseling is, and what it does and does not do.

Here are some good questions to ask the provider when scheduling the first appointment, or at the time of the first appointment. A qualified therapist will be glad to answer these questions, and will appreciate your interest in the therapy process.

- What are your credentials?
- How long have you been in practice?
- What is your location and appointment availability?
- Do you accept phone calls between scheduled appointments if necessary?
- Do you handle billing the insurance company?
- If my insurance stops paying, and therapy is not finished, do you offer a sliding scale?
- What are your fees?
- What is your position on medications?
- Do you specialize in a particular type of treatment or therapy?
- What happens if I have to miss an appointment?
- Might you see other members of my family if appropriate?
- What is your style of therapy like?
- Do you take an active role in the process?
- Do you assign homework?
- Will we set goals early?

- Am I part of the treatment planning?
- How will I know when I am finished with therapy?
- What about confidentiality?
- Do you have anyone that fills in for you when you go on vacation?

If you are bringing in a child for therapy, it is helpful to discuss what information the therapist is going to share with you, and if the therapy will involve other family members.

## The Therapist’s Role in Therapy

All of these professionals have the same overall goals — to help the client(s) sort out problem areas in his/her life, provide a safe environment in which to explore and express feelings about these areas, and develop better methods of addressing these issues.

Therapists usually have their own particular style in which they try to accomplish the above. Some may be very interactive with you and focus primarily on problem resolution. They may assign “homework” between sessions to reinforce more productive behaviors. Some may be less participatory in the sessions, and choose to help guide you to finding your own answers through listening and exploring how the past has affected the present.

It is important that you feel comfortable with the therapist, regardless of his/her qualifications. You need to feel really “heard” and understood when you share your thoughts and feelings. Your therapist needs to respect your feelings and beliefs, and should not try to impose any of his/her own personal values on you.

A therapist should not try to force you to talk about anything you are not ready to discuss, but also should encourage and support you to address the issues and feelings that may be harder to acknowledge and address.

## Your Role in Therapy

Understand that there are no “magic cures”, and the therapist cannot “fix” the problem for you. Therapy requires hard work and patience. At times you may feel worse before you feel better. Do not get discouraged and give up. At times you may start feeling better and think everything is fine and stop therapy too soon. Always bring up any of these feelings to your therapist and discuss them together. Do talk with your therapist if you feel that you are “stuck”.

Be prepared to challenge yourself to grow and look at things in a different way than you may be used to. Understand that the therapist, while trained in this field, does not have all the answers and is not perfect. The answers, most often, are inside of you—the therapist just helps you look inside to find them in a way that feels safe and supportive.

Be committed to the process—do not miss appointments unless absolutely necessary, and be open to suggestions the therapist might make of ways to act in different ways than you are used to, or to look at things from a different angle.

Both you and your therapist have the same goal for you in therapy—improved relationships, growth, and more satisfaction and fulfillment out of life.