

# GOOD SHEPHERD INSTITUTE of THE BLUEGRASS



## Patient & General Services Handbook

Welcome to the *Good Shepherd Institute of the Bluegrass Psychological Services Center* (GSIB)! We know that it takes courage to decide to change your life for the better. We are honored that you are exploring the possibility of allowing us to work with you.

This handbook will provide you with some basic information about GSIB such as our philosophy, what constitutes and contributes to human flourishing, the services we offer, as well as our policies and procedures. You will also find information about using the GSIB Online Patient Portal, scheduling and cancelling appointments, fees and billing, the benefits and risks of therapy, your rights as a patient, and resources in case you have questions about our services, policies, or procedures.

### First, Our Story

*Good Shepherd Institute of the Bluegrass* (GSIB) was established in 2019 (on the Feast of Saint John Paul II) as a ministry of *Family Renewal Project* in Louisville, KY. *Family Renewal Project* (FRP) is a lay apostolate founded in 2016 to empower men and women to understand, embrace, and live authentic love and responsibility. To learn more information about *Family Renewal Project*, please visit [www.familyrenewalproject.com](http://www.familyrenewalproject.com). As part of its mission, *Family Renewal Project* established GSIB in order to deliver high quality mental health care that is rooted and informed by a Catholic/Christian vision of the human person. After three years of development, GSIB opened its doors at St. James Catholic Church/School in Elizabethtown, KY and St. Raphael the Archangel Catholic Church/School in Louisville, KY. [Due to various circumstances, particularly the effects of coronavirus, effective November 8, 2020, in-person office hours at St. James in Elizabethtown have been suspended. For anyone interested in faith-based professional psychological help we offer in-person sessions on Wednesdays and Thursdays at St. Raphael in Louisville and virtual sessions as needed.]

### Our Philosophy

The clinicians at GSIB are passionate about integrating psychological services with the belief that each of us is designed for a beautiful plan and meant to be happy and healthy.

At GSIB, we want to help people break the chains of unpleasant or harmful patterns in their lives and live abundantly! This means engaging fully in their relationships and learning how to love and be loved. We at GSIB believe every human being was created primarily to be loved by others and to live in relationship with others. We also believe every human being was designed to love others through self-gift, or the giving of yourself, your time, your efforts to others around you. Only in being able to do both –to *be loved* and *give love* – will people find happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction. We believe that people are meant to be happy and healthy and that freedom from destructive or overwhelming patterns is possible!

We believe one of the ways that people can break destructive patterns is by seeking psychological therapy services. We strive to offer high-quality, evidence-based therapy that is rooted in scientific knowledge and grounded by a Catholic/Christian vision of the human person. Ultimately, our vision of what “health” means for a human being is based on the teachings of the Catholic faith and informed by not only scientific studies but Church history, the examples of the saints, and the official doctrine of the Catholic Church. Although anyone from any faith or religious background is welcome to receive services at GSIB, the organization itself is focused on providing care that is in line with a Catholic anthropology.

So what *does* the Catholic Church teach about the human person? This is a rich and complex set of teachings, but we’ve listed a few key points we believe are central to an adequate understanding of the human person:

- The human person is created by a loving God primarily *to be loved*
- The human person is created by a loving God *to love* God and other people
- The human person is meant to be in loving relationships with other people, as family members, friends, spouses, coworkers, and neighbors. A commitment to marriage or religious life is not required for a person to be happy, but relationships with others are a fundamental need for all people.
- The human person is not meant to be used by another person or by other people; such as in cases of abuse, pornography, or monetary gain. People are not objects to be used but persons to be loved.

All of these understandings of the human person inform the psychological services offered at GSIB. However, just as every human person is a unique individual; every person’s therapy must be individualized based on his/her unique needs. As each person begins therapy, they complete an intake questionnaire and schedule an initial session with the therapist. During this intake process there will be opportunities for you to clarify your needs and help define what you would/would not like to be included as part of your therapy. We welcome your participation in your own care!

## **Our Services: Therapy | Consultations | Presentations**

### **Individual Therapy**

We offer a variety of psychological services such as individual psychotherapy sessions for children (ages 5-17), adolescents, and adults. Individual therapy sessions can address mental health concerns you or your child are having such as: worrying, depression, concern about certain relationships in your life, social skills training, parenting skills and confidence, stress about work or work-life balance, trauma, or exploring some of the areas of your life in which you would like to grow. While for adolescents and adults, the majority of psychotherapy will be verbal, children’s therapy will consist of a specialized form of therapy called Play Therapy. Play therapy is based on sound scientific evidence that children process many of their emotions and thoughts not by talking but by playing. If you have questions about what play therapy consists of or what it can do for your child, please feel free to inquire by phone [502-632-3249] or at your first session.

### **Couples’ and Family Therapy**

In addition to individual therapy, we offer therapy for couples whether dating, engaged, or married and for families. These sessions are designed to help the couple and/or family communicate more effectively and understand each other better in order to problem-solve, resolve issues, or just grow closer together. Please note: we do not perform or participate in custody evaluations or divorce proceedings.

## **Group Therapy**

We also offer group therapy for those seeking professional assistance with certain mental health or relationship concerns. Group therapy may be recommended by your therapist for many reasons. There will be special groups organized by the therapist throughout the year that may be helpful for you as a patient. Group therapy is an excellent way to seek support from others who understand what struggling with a particular problem or situation in life is like. It is a wonderful way to foster community and improve relationships in your own life and to discover new insights about yourself and the way you interact with other people. Specialized groups are offered at various times of the year. Some examples include parenting groups, social skills groups, postpartum groups, and more. If you are interested in knowing what groups are currently available or anticipated at GSIB, please contact us [502-632-3249 | [www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com](http://www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com)].

## **Professional Psychological Consultations**

We offer professional psychological consultations for businesses or parishes interested in implementing, updating, developing, or maintaining resources for their employees/parishioners that may improve mental health or seek to address psychological needs within the organizational community. Please let us know the areas in which you are seeking assistance &/or the type of information you would like to provide for your organization and we will gladly follow up to discuss the ways we can help! [502-632-3249 | [www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com](http://www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com)]

## **Psychoeducational Presentations**

Finally, we offer psychoeducational talks/presentations for various audiences. Each is tailored for the particular audience as a way to provide information about a variety of topics such as the effects of technology, parenting, improving mental health, postpartum depression, work-life balance, the effects of physical health on mental health, how to increase resilience, and much more! Please let us know what topic(s) you would like presented or which audience(s) you would like to reach [502-632-3249 | [www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com](http://www.familyrenewalproject/psychologicalservices.com)]

## **Benefits and Risks of Therapy**

It is important for you to understand the benefits and risks of therapy before you agree to pursue and complete treatment. Some of the benefits include a decrease in distressing mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, grief, other negative emotions, difficulty managing sleeping or eating, addiction behaviors, trauma-related symptoms, and other distressing symptoms. Other benefits include increased and improved functioning in your life and improved relationships. Some risks of therapy include the experience of unpleasant or painful emotions during the therapy work itself. Much of the *work* in therapy can sometimes make patients feel frustration, sadness, grief, anger, emotional pain, or shame. It may also become apparent that ending or changing certain relationships in your life would be beneficial. This kind of change can at times include a difficult transition. However, in most cases the change can lead to more positive relationships and experiences in your life.

## Online Patient Portal

GSIB uses an online, electronic health records management system that protects patient information, maintains and stores patient charts and records, manages billing and online payments, and houses patients' financial statements. The online system includes a confidential patient portal for your use. Before your first session you will receive an email that includes a link to the patient portal and your personal log-in information. From the patient portal you can:

- Schedule, cancel, and reschedule appointments
- Review and sign consent forms
- Complete intake paperwork *[recommended as it saves valuable time during your initial session]*
- Make online payments (if you choose to pay online)
- View financial statements
- Send safe, secure, encrypted messages to your therapist *[please never send sensitive or personal information in a personal email or via the FRP/GSIB website; these are not protected forms of communication]*

Please familiarize yourself with the patient portal and feel free to call us at 502-632-3249 with any questions!

## Informed Consent

When you decide to receive psychological services at GSIB, you enter into a therapeutic contract. This Patient & General Services Handbook is designed to make this contract explicit and contains information about our policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and discuss any questions or concerns you have with your therapist. Additional information regarding our privacy policies and how we handle your Protected Health Information (PHI) can be found in our Notice of Privacy Practices. We require your consent to the information contained in this Patient & General Services Handbook and our Notice of Privacy Practices before entering into a professional relationship with you as a patient. You have the right to withhold consent from us. However, if you choose to withhold consent, we will be unable to provide you with services. In such a case, we would offer to refer you to another provider. Similarly, you have the right to revoke your consent either verbally or in writing at any time. At that point, we must stop providing services to you unless we are otherwise legally obligated to provide services. We are permitted to seek any outstanding payments for services we provided to you prior to your consent being revoked.

## Confidentiality

Our confidentiality policies are outlined in detail in the document called "Notice of Privacy Policies". We understand that in order for patients to feel safe during therapy, it is important to carefully protect privacy. We take privacy very seriously and have physical and digital protections in place to guard your personal health information (PHI) in your patient chart. It is important that you understand the exceptions to confidentiality:

- In cases in which a child under the age of 18, a vulnerable adult (mentally disabled), or a senior adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited, our therapist is a mandated reporter and must report this abuse to the proper authorities. Child abuse includes physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and includes the making, storing, or distribution of child pornography. **Please note: If you mention a minor (such as a teenager) is taking nude photos of themselves or another minor or distributing nude photos of themselves or another minor (such as in the case of sexting), the therapist is required to report this as distribution of child pornography to the proper authorities.**

- In cases in which you express suicidal or homicidal intentions, the therapist must contact the proper authorities to protect you and any threatened third parties.
- In cases in which the court system, either by a subpoena, court order, or a search warrant, is requiring the therapist to share your patient file or any PHI, the therapist must comply.
- Finally, the therapist reviews cases with a supervisor in order to provide high quality care to every patient. These review processes are private and the supervisor is not allowed to share your PHI with anyone else who is not authorized by you in writing.

The only way that we can share your information outside of the exceptions noted above is by obtaining written consent from you.

Your PHI will be stored in your patient chart in our electronic health records system that is encrypted, password protected, and accessible only to the therapist, the therapist's supervisor, and potential future staff members who have had training in confidentiality practices and have agreed to keep your records confidential. You can access parts of your records via your patient portal; if you need a complete copy, this request must be submitted in writing. You may be asked to pay a printing fee. [NOTE: None of the founders or associates of Family Renewal Project (other than the therapist & the therapist's supervisor) will ever have access to PHI records.]

All of these practices and procedures are explained in more detail in our Notice of Privacy Practices.

## **Working with a Minor**

We believe the involvement of parents is very important and helpful in working with children. If the patient is a minor, under the age of 18, his/her parent or guardian must give consent for us to provide services to him/her. In addition to giving their consent, we ask that parents or legal guardian(s) take an active role in the treatment or evaluation we provide to their child. However, in some cases and especially in working with older children and adolescents, some amount of privacy for the child is helpful for them to make progress in reaching therapeutic goals. We will seek to keep parents/guardians informed about how the work is going and any major risk issues that arise. Before beginning work with a minor, parents/guardians will negotiate with the therapist the precise boundaries regarding the child's privacy on a case-by-case basis. Parents and legal guardians have the right to access their children's personal health information, or the information in their patient charts.

## **Confidentiality during Couples' Therapy**

When working with a couple, both partners will need to sign consent forms. In such cases, we regard the relationship to be the primary patient instead of either partner. This means that privacy from either partner cannot be guaranteed. If one partner discloses information to the therapist and wishes to keep it private from the other partner, the therapist may discuss with that partner why sharing the information in therapy may have therapeutic benefits. The therapist will not agree to keep secrets for either partner from the other partner as this oftentimes is not therapeutic for the couple. Please note: we do not perform or participate in custody evaluations or divorce proceedings.

## **Confidentiality during Family Therapy**

Much like couples' therapy, all parties that will be included in family therapy that are of legal age will need to sign a consent form. Parents or legal guardians will need to sign on behalf of any child under the age of 18. In

these cases, we regard the family to be the primary patient. Like with couples' therapy, this means that the privacy of any one member cannot be guaranteed. If a member of the family discloses information to the therapist and wishes to keep it private from the other members, the therapist may decide that it is most therapeutic for that member to share that information with the rest of the family. The therapist will not agree to keep secrets for any member of the family. Once again, please note: we do not perform or participate in custody evaluations or divorce proceedings.

## **Confidentiality during Group Therapy**

Group therapy is somewhat different from individual, couples', and family therapy and necessitates that all members of the group discuss the rules of privacy and confidentiality before the group begins. Everyone in the group signs not only a consent form to be treated in group therapy but also a form agreeing to keep group members' information private. There is no guarantee that your private information will be kept confidential however because the information is accessible to other group members (for example, what you say in group therapy is known by all members). Despite this risk, group therapy has been shown to be effective in treating a number of mental health disorders and struggles such as providing social skills training, support for parents, trauma survivors, and people struggling with addiction. If you have any further questions about the benefits, risks, or terms of receiving group therapy at GSIB or which groups are currently available or anticipated, please ask your therapist.

## **Appointments**

Appointments may be scheduled, rescheduled, or cancelled via your online patient portal or by phone [502-632-3249].

At GSIB & other practices you will most often hear therapy sessions referred to as an "hour", however, the typical therapy appointment lasts 45-50 minutes and at GSIB, therapy sessions generally last 50 minutes.

If the therapist is running late, we will do our best to give you the full 50 minutes of your therapy session. If you are late, we may be unable to meet for the full time due to scheduling constraints.

We understand that life happens and schedules change! If you need to cancel an appointment, please note that GSIB requires at least 24 hours' advance notice of cancellations for scheduled appointments. Except for unpredictable emergencies (such as illness, accident, or danger), canceling an appointment with less than 24-hour notice or failing to show up for a scheduled appointment may result in you or your responsible party incurring a "Late Cancel/No-Show" fee of \$45.

## **Termination of Therapy**

You may terminate therapy at any time. When our work comes to a close, we ask that you schedule at least one final session to review the work you have accomplished. If in the future, you find that you would like to return to therapy to process new challenges in your life, please know you are always welcome to return to GSIB. This will be dependent on the discretion of the therapist and the therapist's availability.

## Contacting the Therapist

The best way to communicate with your GSIB therapist is during your regularly scheduled appointment. If you need to contact the therapist outside of this time, you may call our dedicated phone number [502-632-3249] and the therapist will return your call within 24-48 hours. [\* Please note: The parish staff does not process calls for GSIB. Please contact us directly at (502) 632-3249.]

Another means of contacting your therapist is through the secure, encrypted messaging system in your patient portal. The therapist will respond to any secure messages as soon as possible.

Also note: GSIB therapists will not communicate with patients via social media, text messages, or standard email. These are not secure and confidential methods of communication and in order to protect your confidentiality, the therapist will not respond to patient communication in those forms.

**If you are experiencing a clinical emergency (in danger of seriously harming yourself or another person), please do not attempt to call the therapist because the therapist may not be available to reach you immediately. Please call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room. Additionally, you may consider calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a 24/7 hotline designed to give support to those who are experiencing suicidal thoughts and intentions. The hotline number is 1-800-273-8255.**

## Fees and Financial Policies

At GSIB, we understand that seeking psychological services is often a financial investment. We believe that psychological health is essential in maintaining overall health and poor psychological health can impact physical health and make it difficult to function in your life. We do our best to make psychological services accessible and affordable.

At GSIB, the first appointment is a 90-minute clinical interview designed to get to know you and your goals, clarifying the nature of your struggles, and exploring ways that we can work together to reach your goals. Sessions after the initial appointment are each 50 minutes in length, unless alternate arrangements are made. Our fees are as follows:

- Initial / intake appointment (90 minutes): \$130
- Subsequent sessions (50 minutes): \$90
- Group Sessions (90 minutes): \$50

Currently, GSIB does not accept any form of insurance (more info below) nor do we offer reduced fees on a sliding scale. If accessing psychological services at GSIB is a concern for you based on cost, please let us know and we attempt to help you identify alternative solutions. We may recommend conducting sessions of different duration than those quoted here.

All patients are required to pay for the services they receive at the time of service, unless we have an agreement in place to bill a third party for the services you are receiving (e.g. when a third party has sent you for an evaluation for treatment and they agree to pay for the services). GSIB accepts cash, checks (payable to Good Shepherd Institute of the Bluegrass [GSIB]), and credit/debit cards. We process credit/debit cards via our electronic records system which is secure and encrypted. You have the option of saving your credit card number on our records system and authorizing us to make automated charges on your card at midnight following the day that you received services at GSIB. This option makes it convenient for you to make payments.

Many people ask if they can use their medical insurance to pay for our services. Currently, GSIB does not participate in any insurance plans or insurance panels. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost,

we believe we can provide you a higher standard of care by not participating in insurance. When a provider joins an insurance plan, he has to sign a contract with that company. In essence, the insurance company then has oversight of the services provided. No longer does the therapist work for you; he now works for the insurance company who can decide whether treatment is warranted, how much treatment, what kind of treatment, etc. By remaining outside of that system, GSIB is able to exercise greater flexibility and freedom in providing you quality services. We are not bound by obligations to an insurance company but rather are committed solely to you and your well-being. Furthermore, participating in insurance plans requires significant administrative work in submitting claims, following up on claims, challenging mistakes and errors, negotiating, completing additional treatment plans and paperwork required by insurance companies, etc. These activities would require more administrative help, drive our costs up, and take time away from more valuable activities such as planning your care.

You may however submit your own claim to your health insurance company for our services as an “out-of-network” provider. We can provide limited assistance in this process such as supplying you with a statement (sometimes called a “Superbill”) that lists all of the information your insurance company would need to process a claim. You can then mail this statement to the claims department of your insurance company for processing. Regardless of whether your insurance company will reimburse you, our fees remain your responsibility and are due at the time of service.

Some patients have been successful in identifying others who are willing and able to help pay for their psychological services. In some cases, family members, friends, or business- or church-related organizations pay part or all of their fees.

## Your Rights

In receiving any of the services offered at GSIB, each individual has the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Have access to all psychological services we provide regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, or disability
- Use your preferred or legal name
- Be protected from harm (abuse, neglect, and exploitation)
- Receive individualized treatment tailored to meet your specific needs and diagnosis

## Questions?

If you have any questions or need further clarification about any of the information presented in this document, please call GSIB at 502-632-3249 or speak to your therapist.

We look forward to working with you!

[GSIB\_P&GS REV10/30/20]

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*A Ministry of Family Renewal Project*

502.632.3249 | [familyrenewalproject.com/psychologicalservices](http://familyrenewalproject.com/psychologicalservices)