



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE & COUNSELING CENTER

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Welcome to the UAB Employee Assistance and Counseling Center (EACC). We are pleased that you have decided to use our service. The EACC is a voluntary confidential employee assistance and counseling service. Our service is an employee benefit designed to provide employees and their immediate household members with resources for resolving work-related and personal problems. The EACC provides employee assistance, confidential counseling, life coaching, community referral, supervisor consultation, crisis management and a variety of educational programs. Licensed mental health professionals provide confidential individual, family and relationship counseling. Board Certified Coaches provide professional life coaching services. Our goal is to assist our clients in clarifying issues, exploring options, and finding solutions. Our service is provided as an employee benefit of UAB, UAB Medicine, VIVA and the Homewood School System at no cost to our clients.

ASSESSMENT

As a new counseling client, your assessment will take place via telephone with an intake counselor. The intake counselor will explore with you the reasons that caused you to seek counseling and the goals you hope to achieve. At the end of this session, the intake counselor will suggest an appropriate follow-up plan for you. A follow-up appointment may be scheduled at the end of your assessment visit. Please make note that our clinical staff works as a team, consulting with one another, to increase the effectiveness of our services to you. If you are seeking life coaching services, please call to schedule an appointment for an assessment with one of our board certified coaches. During the first session, you and your coach will establish a schedule of sessions based on your needs.

Should you have questions or need to reschedule and appointment, please call us at 205-934-2281, or toll free within Alabama at 1-877-872-2327.

COUNSELING

Counseling sessions are usually 45 to 50 minutes in length. Intervals between sessions will be scheduled dependent upon your needs. Should you decide to terminate the counseling relationship, we recommend that you consult with your counselor to tie up loose ends and to allow for feedback concerning the counseling process.

Children under the age of 15 may be referred externally for individual counseling unless seen within the context of family therapy.

LIFE COACHING

Life coaching sessions are usually 30 to 45 minutes in length. These sessions will occur in person at the EACC, over the computer using distance software, or over the telephone. You and your coach will establish how the sessions will take place during the initial assessment. If you do not make progress towards your established goals, your coach may recommend a 2-6 week hiatus of services.

SCOPE OF BENEFIT AND ELIGIBILITY

The EACC provides services for all eligible persons, without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or veteran status. If it is determined by the clinical staff that an individual's needs exceed the scope of service or expertise available at the EACC, we will assist you to identify an appropriate referral to meet your needs. Services provided to you at the EACC are a benefit at no cost to you by UAB, UAB Medicine, VIVA, and the Homewood School System. The EACC does not pay the costs of therapy or community resources/treatment services to which you may be referred. UAB, UAB Medicine, and VIVA employees and members of their immediate households are eligible for up to 12 sessions each year. Detailed information regarding Homewood School Systems benefits is located on our website, uab.edu/eacc.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We understand that confidentiality is essential to your counseling or coaching progress. Our counselors and coaches are licensed master's level or higher mental health professionals who are ethically and legally bound to maintain your confidentiality. A written and electronic record (date, time, nature of meeting) of your contacts with the EACC will be maintained in a secure manner. Only EACC staff members have access to your clinical record, except as required by law or as described below. Should you need to access your file please contact your therapist or life coach. Your therapist or coach will review the file with you and provide a written summary if requested.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY OF CHILDREN

According to Alabama law (Section 22-8-4), children of age 14 and above may decide who has access to their mental health records and contract for services without informing their parent/guardian. For children under the age of 14, the EACC will treat therapy as private to protect the child's ability to speak freely about their relationships and concerns regarding each parent/guardian. The therapist will keep all information learned from and about the child confidential, although the parent/guardian may be given a broad overview of concerns and updates about treatment. If the child agrees that information is to be shared with parent/guardian, then specific disclosures will be made available to the them.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parent/guardians should understand that telephone, face-to-face, email, or written communication from either parent/guardian/guardian may be shared as is clinically appropriate at the discretion of the therapist, with the other parent/guardian or with the child. Written communications, emails and telephone messages become part of the child's permanent record. The EACC expects parents/guardians to inform each other about scheduled appointments. The EACC is not responsible for routine communication with parents/guardians who do not attend appointments. For example, EACC therapists cannot routinely contact the non-custodial parent/guardian after each appointment. The expectation is that parents/guardians will communicate with each other openly regarding treatment and that each parent/guardian will cultivate a healthy relationship and open communication with the child.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The non-clinical data that you provide may be used for our EAP program evaluation research. You will not be identified and your information is anonymous.

LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All information disclosed in counseling sessions and coaching sessions is strictly confidential and will be released ONLY with your prior written permission, except as otherwise required by law. **The counselor's or coach's legal responsibility to disclose information includes, but is not limited to, the following conditions:** suspected or known child, elder, or disabled person abuse or neglect, mandatory reporting of health care providers experiencing psychiatric or substance abuse disorders that may present a danger to self or others to their licensing boards, threat of danger to another individual, imminent threat of suicide by the client, legal subpoena to present records to comply with a court order, mandatory state and federal requirements, and in any emergency medical circumstance that requires immediate medical attention. If you receive couples or family counseling, records require a written release by all parties or a judge's order to be released.

Due to the strict adherence to our policy of client confidentiality, we are unable to report suspected cases of sexual harassment in the workplace. **If you believe you have a sexual harassment complaint, UAB Policy encourages you to promptly report this situation to the designated official.** If you are a UAB employee, contact the UAB Office of Human Resource Management Relations at 934-4458, Room 260 Administration Building, to report sexual harassment. If you are a UAB Medicine, VIVA or Homewood School System employee, ask your Human Resource Office for information on how to report sexual harassment.

UAB EACC STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING — CONT.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

In the event of a medical or psychiatric emergency, your signature below signifies your consent for any counselor or a staff member of the EACC to contact the person identified as your emergency contact on your initial intake paperwork. A psychiatric emergency is defined as any situation where an assessment or crisis stabilization is warranted as a result of a situation involving imminent risk to you or someone else in accordance with State law.

EACC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

The EACC seeks to maintain an office environment that is free from violence or threats of violence against clients or potential clients. Therefore, partner violence between couples should be shared with your therapist in order to assist with safety planning. Partner violence is defined as any on-going physical violence, sexual violence, intimidation, and/or stalking behavior between persons within an intimate relationship. The EACC will not engage in couples or marital therapy with clients when such behavior is evident due to the volatile dynamics of the relationship, which may exacerbate the abuse. Individual therapy is the appropriate modality of treatment for both parties however, the EACC reserves the right to refuse treatment of one client to protect the wellbeing of another client.

FORMAL SUPERVISOR REFERRALS

If you have been referred to the EACC by your supervisor due to a work performance issue(s), you will be asked to sign a limited release. By signing the limited release, you are verifying that you attended one appointment with a counselor ONLY. An appointment card will be given to you as confirmation that you kept your appointment and should be given to your supervisor upon your return to work. The limited release also reiterates your rights to keep your personal information private. See the above paragraph regarding "Limits of Confidentiality" if you have further questions or concerns.

LEGAL TESTIMONY

It is not the practice of the UAB Employee Assistance and Counseling Center to provide legal testimony for EACC clients. Our therapists are not trained as forensic experts, so if you know that you will require the testimony of a therapist in a court case please let us know so that we can provide you with a referral to a therapist appropriately trained to represent your best interest in such situations. You will be responsible for a fee of \$250 per hour should one of our therapist's be called upon to provide testimony for you in a court of law. This fee also applies to any travel, preparation, and consultation time required of our therapist as a result of court action. The cost to you for record reproduction is \$25 per page.

The EACC does not offer a court approved Anger Management Class. If a client has been court ordered to participate in Anger Management Classes and/or Counseling for domestic violence or any other reason, the EACC may provide counseling only if in addition the client participates in an Anger Management Class elsewhere.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE CLIENT

This service is provided to you as a benefit at no cost to you by UAB, UAB Medicine, VIVA, and Homewood School System. It is your responsibility to attend all appointments as scheduled and on time. If you are unable to attend an appointment, please call as soon as possible to cancel, as there are others who need our services. If you fail to show up for 2 scheduled appointments without calling to notify us, you may be placed on a waiting list for the next available appointment and you will need to speak with your therapist or coach regarding continued service or an appropriate referral.

As a client of the EACC, it is your responsibility to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of other clients that you encounter while visiting our offices.

If at any point you have questions or concerns regarding your service provider or the counseling/life coaching process, it is your right and responsibility concerns to discuss those concerns with your counselor or coach.

UAB EACC STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING — CONT.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

During inclement weather, the UAB Employee Assistance and Counseling Center will make every effort to maintain regular business hours (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). However, when an announcement is made that the UAB campus is closed due to inclement weather, the EACC will also be closed. Such announcements are usually made on the UAB main webpage located at uab.edu, uab.edu/emergency, B-Alert, your local news stations, or WBHM radio (90.3 FM). Also, there may be rare occasions when the EACC office building (a non-UAB property) is closed due to weather or uncontrollable building-related circumstances to protect the safety of the public.

LATE APPOINTMENT POLICY

Tardiness to appointments can have an adverse effect on the therapeutic process if there is not enough time to discuss treatment concerns. If you are a current EACC client and you arrive 15 minutes late or more for your scheduled appointment, you will be asked to reschedule unless your counselor can accommodate you, if their schedule allows. This may mean you will have to wait until your counselor's next available appointment which may be scheduled at least a week out or more. **The EACC late appointment policy applies to life coaching clients as well.**

Also, if you are a life coaching client and arrive at your scheduled intake appointment time 15 minutes late or more and have not completed your life coaching intake paperwork, you may be asked to reschedule your appointment. If you have not completed your intake paperwork as instructed, PLEASE arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment.

DISTANCE LIFE COACHING

The EACC offers life coaching via face-to-face video conferencing to VIVA Health and Homewood City School employees and members of their immediate households. This service is available to clients who are assessed as being appropriate for life coaching after the initial face to face assessment.

Video conferencing coaching sessions are held via Zoom, which is HIPAA compliant and is encrypted to the federal standard. It is recommended that you sign on to your account at least 5 minutes prior to your session start time. You are responsible for initiating the connection with the EACC via the provided link at the time of your session.

Whenever there is communication that lacks visual or audio cues there is a risk of misunderstanding. When this happens, it is important to assume that your coach has positive regard for you, and to check out your assumptions with your coach. This will reduce any unnecessary hardship.

»Limitations of Distance Life Coaching

Distance life coaching should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face life coaching. It is an alternative form of life coaching with certain limitations.

By signing this document you agree that you understand that distance life coaching:

- May lack visual and/or audio cues, which may cause misunderstanding.
- May have disruptions in the service and quality of the technology used.

»Distance Life Coaching Backup Plan in Case of Technology Failure

The most reliable backup is a phone. Therefore, it is recommended that you always have a phone available and that your coach knows your phone number.

If you get disconnected from a video coaching session, restart the session. If you are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, please call your coach at (205) 934-2281.