

MBCC Side by Side Care Ministry Lay Counseling Policies

Background/Training of Lay Counselors

The Side by Side Care Ministry lay counselors have been trained by the Biblical Counseling Center and are overseen by the MBCC Director of Women's Ministry, and by the pastoral staff as needed. Our lay counselors are not professionals in psychological counseling, psychiatric therapy, or marriage and family counseling or therapy, nor are they licensed by the State of Alabama as counselors, social workers, or therapists. Our lay counselors will be happy to cooperate with such advisors and professionals and help you consider their counsel in light of relevant Biblical principles.

Nature of Lay Counseling Provided

Issues and situations discussed in lay counseling meetings will be addressed from a Biblical perspective. Our lay counselors may also draw on the Biblically-based resources and content provided in their training by the Biblical Counseling Center.

Goal of Lay Counseling Meetings

Each lay counselor and counselee work together to determine a goal that provides the most help for the counselee's issue. Goals might include: establishing a biblical framework for processing life situations, improving relationships with others, facilitating behavior change, developing Biblically-grounded coping mechanisms, or guidance on an important decision.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and our lay counselors will carefully guard the information you entrust to them. However, there are certain situations in which the lay counselor is ethically and legally bound by laws governing the State of Alabama to report information. The following situations will result in confidentiality being waived:

- intent to harm self or someone else
- physical or sexual abuse of a child, an elderly adult, or the disabled
- child neglect
- domestic violence
- criminal conduct
- a subpoena, summons, warrant, or request by law enforcement officials or other government authorities to disclose case notes and information discussed in meetings.

Referrals

The lay counselor reserves the right to refer you (the counselee) at any time to a professional or specialized counselor or therapist if she feels the situation is beyond her ability or training to provide guidance. You have the choice to refuse a referral. If you are referred to a professional counselor, it will be your own responsibility to make an appointment. You and your lay counselor may opt to continue meeting for 1-5 sessions while you pursue professional counseling.

Duration of Counseling

Side by Side Care Ministry provides 1 to 5 sessions (in a calendar year) at 50 minutes per session. Following the first session, the lay counselor and you (the counselee) will agree upon the number of subsequent sessions. Issues requiring more extensive care than five meetings will result in referral to a professional counselor and/or identification of an ongoing support network (a mentor, accountability partner, a small group or Life Group, Community Group, etc.).

Appointments

Meetings will be scheduled by you (the counselee) and your lay counselor. If you arrive late to an appointment, please be aware that your allotted time starts with the set appointment time and not the time when you show up. If you have an appointment scheduled and need to cancel or reschedule, please contact your lay counselor as soon as you become aware of this need.

Fees

There are no fees or charges for the lay counseling meetings.

Termination of Counseling

Your lay counselor and you (as the counselee) each have the right to end counseling at any time. You may grant permission to your lay counselor to check in with you periodically concerning matters discussed in counseling meetings.