

# Tips for Choosing a Counselor

In an effort to provide you with a method to access resources in our community, Montgomery Community Church (MCC) has created a list of local counselors who are Christian. This is not a comprehensive list but a sample of Christian counselors in the Greater Cincinnati Area. Many have been referred to us by church attendees, friends, staff, etc. In addition, many insurance companies now list counselors by special interest area. Be sure to ask your insurance provider for their list of Christian counselors. The list offered by MCC is updated yearly and the information is subject to change. Alternately, you may find a counselor who is helpful to you that is not affiliated with a particular faith. Regardless of whether you choose a counselor that incorporates your faith into the sessions or not, this information should be helpful in your search.

## Determine Your Readiness for Professional Involvement

Questions you may want to consider before contacting a counselor are:

- How severe is the problem?*
- How motivated am I to change?*
- Do I want short-term help with the unpleasant symptoms I am experiencing and/or do I want longer-term help to explore the underlying causes of the symptoms?*
- Do I want help to prevent issues from coming up again in the future?*
- How much time am I willing to commit to this process?*
- What helped me in the past when I grappled with this issue?*
- What resources have I tried already?*
- How did those work for me (books, friends, support groups, seminars, A-teams, church-sponsored groups)?*
- How much can I afford to spend?*
- Can I pay for this out-of-pocket or will my insurance cover the cost?*
- What will the emotional/spiritual price be to me and my loved ones if I do not get help?*

These questions may help you to consider what has worked for you in the past, what has not, and to determine your need for professional involvement.

## Finding the Right Match

When considering what counselor to choose, you may want to ask friends for recommendations of people they have found helpful. In addition, it is appropriate to try a session or two with a counselor and see how well you work together. If you don't find that you've made a good connection, feel free to try a different person for a session until you get the right fit (after first ending your relationship with the initial counselor). While it is not wise to switch counselors in the middle of therapy, it is appropriate to do some exploration in the introductory stages to find a person you feel comfortable working with. You may also let the counselor know you are in the process of exploring a good fit and would like to try a few sessions before you commit to working with that particular person. Location and appointment availability are also important factors to consider. You are more likely to go to regular appointments if they fit your schedule and if the location is convenient to you. Also, consider if you would prefer working with a male or female counselor, or if it makes a difference at all to you.

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## Getting the Information You Need

The following questions are helpful to ask when selecting a counselor that is right for you. Feel free to request to speak with the receptionist at the agency or the counselor themselves if you have questions. These questions may help you narrow the field. Many counselors are willing to answer questions over the phone when you are inquiring about their services. More detailed questions may be discussed during the first session.

### *Experience/Approach*

□ *What are your areas of specialty? What are your areas of competencies?*  
Specialty and Competency Areas are two different categories that overlap. Generally, Specialty Areas are those categories that the counselor is expert in. Counselors tend to specialize in the areas that interest them most. Competency Areas are topics that the counselor is proficient in. For example, a family counselor may specialize in marriage counseling however, he or she likely has adequate training in working with the whole family system including children. Some examples of these areas are: marriage, substance-abuse, administration, mental health, and diagnosis and treatment of personality disorders, etc.

□ *What are your credentials?* (see “Breaking the Code...” below)

□ For counselors who are Christian:

*If I would like to incorporate prayer into the sessions, how will that work?*

*How do you integrate Biblical principles into the sessions?*

*What are your views on topics that are important to me (e.g. divorce, re-marriage, roles of husband and wife in marriage, etc)?*

□ *What is your general approach to counseling?*

Any counselor will be able to name and briefly describe their theoretical approach to counseling. Some approaches include: Person-Centered Counseling, Solution-Focused, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Eclectic to name a few. Feel free to inquire about the approach and how that will impact your overall experience with that counselor.

### *Payment/Scheduling*

Counseling is an investment in your mental health and in your relationships. In other words, it is not cheap. You can expect to pay between \$80-150 per session. Counselors with doctorate degrees will be on the higher end of that range.

□ *How often do you schedule sessions (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)?*

□ *How do you determine the length of the counseling process (weeks, months, and years)?*

□ *Do you accept insurance? What form of payment do you accept? When is payment due?*

□ *How much are your session fees? How long does each session last? Do you have a sliding fee scale based on income?*

□ *What is your session cancellation policy and “no-show” policy?*

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## Explore Alternative Resources

Montgomery Community Church, other local churches and community agencies offer a variety of alternative resources. For instance,

- Educational seminars or classes dealing with topics such as finances, marriage enrichment, divorce, communication skills, mental illness, spiritual growth, parenting, leadership-development, etc.
- Community and faith-based support groups related to grief, spiritual growth, understanding your purpose, sexual-abuse recovery, adult children of alcoholics, substance-abuse recovery, marriage enrichment, mental illness, etc.
- *Stephen Ministry*: The Stephen Series is a complete system that provides the structure, training, and resources to set up and administer a lay caring ministry. Lay caregivers (called Stephen Ministers) provide one-to-one Christian care to the bereaved, hospitalized, terminally ill, separated, divorced, unemployed, relocated, and others facing a crisis or life challenge. Stephen Ministers help pastors and local congregations by providing quality caring ministry for people as long as they need it. For more information about MCC's Stephen Ministry, contact Terry Schroeder @ 513.469.6514.

Information about current seminars and/or ministries sponsored by Montgomery Community Church is available online at [www.mcc.us](http://www.mcc.us) or at our Welcome Center.

*Biblically-based Books, Magazines, Radio, Websites, and tapes/CDs*: Books with a biblical perspective on almost any topic are available at local Christian bookstores, online book retailers, and many local bookstores. Audio CDs on specific topics may also be ordered from MCC (online requests through the website).

Examples of other places to order tapes/CDs are:

- Willow Creek Church
- Focus on the Family (marriage and family issues)
- Family Life

Examples of Christian websites that may be helpful are:

- Crown Financial Ministries ([www.crown.org](http://www.crown.org)),
- Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University ([www.daveramsey.com](http://www.daveramsey.com)),
- Willow Creek Church resources ([www.willowcreek.com](http://www.willowcreek.com)),
- American Association of Christian Counselors ([www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net)),
- Cloud-Townsend Resources ([www.cloudtownsend.com](http://www.cloudtownsend.com)) and
- New Life Ministries ([www.newlife.com](http://www.newlife.com)).

In addition, magazine subscriptions to faith-based monthly and quarterly publications are available. Local Christian radio stations provide a valuable source of music, programming, and talk shows that can offer inspiration, support, and encouragement.

*MCC does not provide professional counseling services. However, we do offer biblical, pastoral counseling sessions. To schedule a session with an MCC pastor, please call (513) 489-0892.*

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*The list below represents only a small number of quality Christian counselors in the Cincinnati area. The counseling agencies listed are agencies with whom MCC is familiar. Rates range in price among agencies. Some counselors have a sliding scale fee based on income. Some accept insurance, some do not. Be sure to inquire about each agency's policy!*

**Professional Pastoral-Counseling Institute (PPI)** 513.791.5990, 8035 Hosbrook Rd. Cincinnati, OH 45236

- **Dick Donnenwirth, Bill Cahalan, Flo Dewitt, or Sandy Morgenthal**

**LifeWay Christian Counseling Centers** – [www.lifewaycenters.com](http://www.lifewaycenters.com) – 513-769-4600 – Multiple Tri-state locations.  
Depression, Anxiety, Marital Conflict, Pre-marital, Addictions, Grief, Children/Adolescents, Eating Disorders, Recovery

**Mark Pruden & Associates** 310 Terrace Ave. Suite 210 Cincinnati, OH 45220 (near UC)

- **Mark Pruden** – 513-861-6543, Depression, Anxiety, Posttraumatic Stress, AD/HD, Anger, Bipolar Disorders
- **Holli Abrinica** – 513-885-8357, Sexual Addiction and Abuse recovery, Pre-marital Package

**Thompson & Associates** 513-489-1171, 7800 Cooper Rd. #101A Cincinnati, OH 45242 (Montgomery Rd.)

- **Dr. Thomas Thompson, Cheryl White, David Barr, Kate McKinney, Jill Thompson - Individual, Marriage & Family, Pre-marital, Depression, Anxiety, Grief, Addictions, Child & Adolescent, Art Therapy, Abuse Recovery**

**Deerfield Township Family Counseling Center** 7577 Central Parke Blvd., Suite 326, Mason, Ohio 45040, 513-770-3231

- **Gary Key, LISW-S** has been a licensed therapist for over thirty years. He specializes in working with adults, couples, and adolescents who have been wounded by drugs or alcohol, sexual issues, divorce, depression, anxiety, and other difficulties. He enjoys giving respectful guidance to people and loves to see the hope treatment produces in their lives. His Christian faith has afforded him the humble opportunities to see God's work in a therapeutic setting.

**Susan L. Kleine, Christian Counselor**, [www.skleine.com](http://www.skleine.com); 513-739-3463

**Carol Galvan**, 513-583-0995, 3486 Twenty Mile Way, Loveland 45140. Marriage, family therapy - individuals, couples families.

**GRIP Counseling** – 513-554-0903, 11094 Main St, Sharonville, OH 45241

- **Sally L. Shumard**

**Tri-County Christian Counseling Services Inc.** – [www.tcccs.com](http://www.tcccs.com) – 513-860-2333, 8195 Becket Rd. West Chester, OH 45069

- **Carol Williams M.Ed., M.A., NCC, CEAP** – Professional Clinical Counselor, Certified Life Coach, Mediator

**New Reflections Counseling, Inc.** 513-404-1212 – 10921 Reed - Hartman Hwy, [www.newreflectionsounseling.com](http://www.newreflectionsounseling.com)

- **Beth Bench** – Marriage Counseling, Personal and Social Counseling, Parenting Counseling, Family Counseling, Career Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, Group Counseling, Grief Counseling
- **Matt Pavlik** – Marriage Counseling, Pastoral Counseling, Parenting and Adolescent Counseling, Family Counseling, Personal and Social Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, Supervision, May Independently Diagnose and Treat Mental and Emotional Disorders

**New Beginnings Christian Counseling Services** [www.newbeginningschristiancounseling.org](http://www.newbeginningschristiancounseling.org) – 859-426-9020, 515 Monroe St. Newport, KY 41071

- Individual, Family, Pre-marital, Marriage, Children/Adolescents, Addictions, Anxiety, Stress, Eating Disorders, Depression, Abuse Recovery, Grief & Loss, Abuse Recovery, Career Counseling, Anger

**3 C Counseling and Consulting (The Child Wellness Center)** 513-573-3550, 3484 Irwin Simpson, Mason OH 45040

- **Carole Bower**

**Steffens Counseling Services** 513-238-4658, <http://www.steffenscounseling.com>

- **Barb Steffens** - Book resource - "Your Sexually Addicted Spouse"

**Connections** 513-961-2967, <http://www.connectionspp.org>

- **Rebecca Born**, Christian-based counselor who specializes in helping those who've been sexually abused.

## **GREATER CINCINNATI CRISIS HOTLINE**

- **513-281-CARE** 24-hour suicide and crisis hotline service
- **513-281-2273** Assists with stress management, relationship conflicts and coping with loss  
Services are free, confidential, and TTY-accessible

**Cincinnati Christian University Counseling Services** 513-244-8193 – 2700 Glenway Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45204 (Price Hill)  
<http://www.ccu.edu/counseling>

- - uses supervised counseling students - \$5-25

**Christ's Church in Mason, OH, FREE SERVICES**, Dan Libstorff, PCC - (w) 513-229-3231, [Daniel.Libstorff@ccmason.org](mailto:Daniel.Libstorff@ccmason.org)

# Tips for Choosing a Counselor

## Breaking the Code of Professional Credentials

Research indicates that the quality of a therapist's work is less related to their degree or license and more related to their experience and training. Mental health is a very broad subject and covers a great deal of ground. No one professional (or even one group of professionals) can know everything there is to know about all aspects of mental health treatment. Consequently, mental health professionals usually have particular treatment areas they specialize in beyond their general training in mental health issues. Feel free to discuss any questions that you have concerning a professional's training and experience on a given mental health issue with the professional of your choice. In order to be licensed by the State of Ohio, all of the professionals listed below have completed a specified time of clinical training, supervised experience, and have passed an examination given by the State. All mental health professionals who work in independent practice have some form of post bachelor's degree training (i.e., graduate school or medical school). In the State of Ohio, all licensed mental health professionals are required to obtain some form of continuing education units by attending additional training in order to renew their license.

*The list of licensed mental health professionals in Ohio include:*

### **Psychiatrist (M.D., D.O.)**

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have graduated from a four-year medical school, and have completed both an internship and a residency in psychiatry.

### **Clinical Psychologist (Ph.D, Psy.D)**

Licensed psychologists have graduated from a doctoral program and must complete post-graduate clinical experience. They can provide diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

### **Licensed Professional Counselor or Professional Counselor (L.P.C. or P.C.)**

Professional counselors hold a Master's degree in Counseling and have passed a State Board exam.

### **Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor or Professional Clinical Counselor (L.P.C.C. P.C.C.)**

Professional clinical counselors may work independently and engage in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders. In addition to a master's degree, clinical counselors take an additional 20 semester hours of instruction and pass a State Board exam.

### **Social Worker (LISW, LSW)**

Social workers have graduated from either a masters or doctoral counseling program and have completed 3000 hours (approximately two years of full-time employment) of post-licensure experience in counseling and have passed a license examination administered by the State of Ohio.

### **LSW - Licensed Social Worker**

A licensed social worker works as a social worker under the supervision of psychiatrists, psychiatrist, professional clinical counselor, independent social worker, or psychiatric nurse.

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## **LISW - Licensed Independent Social Worker**

An independent social worker may engage in the private practice of social work as an individual practitioner or as a member of partnership or group practice, which includes the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

## **Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor (CCDC I, II, III)**

A clinician who is certified at the CCDC III level has met the state minimum requirements of: a master's degree; one year of chemical dependency counseling work experience; 270 hours of chemical dependency specific training; completed a preceptorship; and completed both a written and an oral examination.

*(The information cited in this section is taken from the Cleveland Therapists website, [www.clevelandtherapists.com/credentials.html](http://www.clevelandtherapists.com/credentials.html))*