

TRANSITION TO REGULAR FACE-TO-FACE THERAPY

Recently the Pennsylvania Governor's office announced that on Memorial Day Pennsylvania will relinquish Covid-19 mitigation measures regarding gatherings. In addition, the CDC is advising that those *fully* vaccinated against COVID-19 can resume most activities without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart in most indoor places and outdoors, even when there are crowds. At the same time, the CDC cautioned that anyone with a weakened immune system or who is taking certain medications may not be fully protected against the virus even after the vaccine.

With these announcements in mind, Samaritan will be relaxing our present restrictions on **June 1, 2021**, with the hope that most of our therapists will be available to return to face-to-face therapy.

We are advising our therapists who have not been fully vaccinated to maintain the previous "Transition to Face-to-Face Therapy Plan" until either the Pennsylvania mask mandate has been repealed for unvaccinated people or the therapist is fully vaccinated. This is to keep you safe.

Please remember that Samaritan adopted the following guiding statement at the pandemic's outset for all of us to follow whenever we're in doubt about how to safely do our work:

Do no harm, do what heals

SAMARITAN'S FACE-TO-FACE AND OFFICE PLAN:

Our commitment to doing no harm while doing what heals extends both to clients and therapists. We want to offer a safe environment where healing can take place.

Due to the adaptations we've made throughout the pandemic, we now consider Samaritan to be a center that offers *both* face-to-face and virtual therapy **depending on the client's choice**, in conjunction with the therapist's availability. Clients can choose which mode of therapy they prefer. The therapist, in consultation with the clinical director, may also decide on certain hours and/or days that will be virtual and that will be in-person. The following guidelines will be followed for face-to-face sessions in Samaritan offices beginning June 1:

- Clients will no longer be required to sign a coronavirus consent form prior to in-person appointments.
- Therapists will inquire from the client prior to the session whether the client has been partially or fully vaccinated. The vaccinated therapist can decide whether to see an unvaccinated client face-to-face. We are mindful that some vaccinated therapists may live with or be in close contact with unvaccinated family and friends.

- For the time being, therapists should ask clients to wear masks upon entering the building until they have entered the therapist's office.
- We encourage clients to apply a squirt of hand sanitizer prior to sitting down. Clients should put their masks on as they are leaving the session and are encouraged to take another squirt of hand sanitizer as they leave.
- The therapist will do a quick sanitizing of hard surfaces the client may have touched. If the client has not been fully vaccinated, the therapist should do a more intensive cleaning of touched surfaces before the next client, although this cleaning is not required to be as intensive as was required previously.
- Since air circulation decreases the spread of the virus by reducing the concentration of droplets, therapists are still encouraged to their vortex type fans in offices.
- If an unvaccinated client uses a bathroom, all surfaces (toilet seat, toilet paper housing, sink, and doorknobs) must be disinfected by the therapist after such use.
- In offices with multiple therapists or administrative staff who have been fully vaccinated, masks do not need to be worn in offices and common areas, as long as there is common agreement. If a client walks by staff in a common area, staff should act in a manner that helps the client feel safe—stepping back, turning away, or other gesture that indicates we are keeping the client's safety in mind.
- Staff will be responsible for periodically sanitizing copiers, drawer handles, microwave, Keurig, counter tops, refrigerator handles after each use, and will wash with soap and immediately place in the drying rack any mugs used for drinks. They are encouraged to only use disposable utensils and portable containers from home for food. Also, they will wash their hands prior to handling mugs in the drying rack to place them in cupboards.

Case Conferences: at this time we're not sure what the state guidance will be for small gatherings like our case conferences, so we will be waiting until September to potentially host an in-person case-conference and over the summer they will remain virtual.