

Practice Policies

Lavina Velasco Counseling, PLLC

<https://www.lavinavelascocounseling.com/>

Office Mobile: 217-991-8309

701 Devonshire Drive, C-38, Champaign, IL 61820

Email: info@lavinavelascocounseling.com (<mailto:info@lavinavelascocounseling.com>)

PRACTICE POLICIES

Please read carefully the practice policies below. If you have any questions or concerns you wish to address before agreeing to these policies, feel free to contact me to schedule a brief phone call prior to your Intake session. You are also encouraged to ask questions or discuss any of these policies at any time during your therapy process.

APPOINTMENTS

The standard meeting time for follow-up sessions is **50-minutes**. Both client and therapist agree to meet on time. If a client is late to a session, the client should still expect to end the session at the original scheduled time, and may therefore lose some session time. A personal credit card (*not* an HSA/HRS/FSA account) must be kept on file to hold your appointments and cover any cancellation fees that may occur.

CANCELLATION FEE

Clients will be charged the full session fee for any appointment that is cancelled or missed for any reason. This is necessary because a time commitment is made to you and is held exclusively for you. The cancellation fee includes any amount normally covered by insurance, in addition to the copay amount. This is an out-of-pocket fee and cannot be charged to an HSA/HRS/FSA account. *The cancellation fee may be waived for clients who reschedule a session within the week of the original session date.* Upon client request, the therapist will make every possible effort to reschedule within the same calendar week, but makes no guarantee of available openings.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

The current fees for services are posted at: <https://www.lavinavelascocounseling.com/services-fees>

Fees are annually reviewed and subject to change.

You may access the Simple Practice Client Portal at any time to view your account balance, invoices, and statements. The Client Portal automatically generates session invoices and monthly statements. The system will default to email notification of monthly statements unless you communicate a preference to also receive email notification of invoices.

If you are using insurance, keep in mind that initial invoices are not final/accurate, because insurance typically takes 1-2 weeks to process and pay claims. I will collect payment/co-pays at the end of the month after insurance claims have been submitted/paid, unless you inform me of a preference to pay at the time of each session. I will use the credit card on file to run payments unless you communicate a preference to pay by check or make other arrangements.

Standard intake, progress, and treatment plan notes are included in standard fees for service.

COMMUNICATION IN-BETWEEN THERAPY SESSIONS

Emergencies: I encourage you to notify and speak with me about any crisis you may be going through. Please also keep in mind that as a private practice, outpatient mental health therapist, I am not available on-call for emergency crisis support after regular office hours. If you are having a true emergency, please use the care options below.

- Call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest Hospital Emergency Room
- National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>): 988
- Crisis Text Line (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>): Text HOME to 741741

Non-Urgent Communication. Please expect phone calls, mobile texts, and e-mails to be returned within 24-48 hours and generally be limited to scheduling matters. Note that therapists cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media, with the exception of HIPAA compliant Telehealth platforms.

Social Media: Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the need to minimize the hindrance of "dual relationships," your therapist will not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site.

Public Encounters: If we happen to meet in public, I will not approach or acknowledge you first, in order to protect your privacy and confidentiality. If you want to acknowledge me, I will be happy to speak briefly, but any issues related to therapy work will have to wait until the next scheduled session.

TELEHEALTH

Face-to-sessions are generally ideal and recommended for initial intake sessions whenever possible. Clients who wish to use information technology for some or all of their therapy will need to review and sign a separate Telehealth Consent form. In some cases, Telehealth is contraindicated. A brief phone consult may be necessary to screen for risks and benefits prior to starting therapy. The pros and cons of Telehealth may be reviewed and reassessed at any time. Read more here about how to determine if Telehealth is a good fit for you: <https://tinyurl.com/yzy7ktah>

COURT APPEARANCES, LETTERS, OTHER PAPERWORK & COURT APPEARANCES

If clients require assistance for other professional services such as report writing, telephone conversations that last longer than 15 minutes, or attendance at meetings and consultations you have requested, clients will be billed a pro-rated amount based on the current standard session fee posted

at LavinaVelascoCounseling.com (e.g. \$150/hour). Please keep in mind your therapist provides therapeutic services, but not forensic services (e.g. documentation for disability).

Since the client-therapist relationship is built on trust with the foundation of that trust being confidentiality, it is often damaging to the therapeutic relationship for the therapist to be asked to present records to the court, testify whether factual or in an expert nature, in court or deposition. The therapist asks that clients only request a court appearance in extreme cases. Court appearance will likely result in the need to terminate therapy and refer you to another therapist. In such cases as the therapist is ordered to testify by the court about his/her counseling with you, the therapist will be monetarily compensated as set forth below. Court appearances are billed at \$200 per hour with a minimum charge of eight (8) hours, for a total of one thousand six-hundred (\$1600) dollars. I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

PAUSING OR DECREASING THERAPY FREQUENCY

It is common for clients to decrease session frequency, for example, from weekly > bi-weekly > monthly > "as-needed" as goals are achieved and new skills are mastered. Clients are welcome to return and request increased future support with the understanding that the therapist's scheduling availability cannot be guaranteed to stay the same.

DISCONTINUING THERAPY

Both the client and the therapist have the right to discontinue therapy at their discretion. Your therapist agrees to refrain from terminating the counseling relationship without first discussing and exploring the reasons and purpose of terminating. In a similar manner, it will be helpful and appreciated if you extend the same courtesy to your therapist. Your therapist may appropriately discuss with you the need to discontinue treatment if the therapist determines that the counseling services are not being effectively used, the client is in default on payment, there is a conflict of interest, or the client's needs are outside the therapist's scope of competence or practice.

If a client fails to schedule an appointment for four (4) consecutive weeks or if a client cancels an appointment without rescheduling within 30 days, the therapist must consider the professional counseling relationship to be discontinued for legal and ethical reasons, unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

BY SIGNING BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.