

What kind of professional will I be seeing?

There are several mental health professions and several licenses in Illinois. This can, understandably, be confusing for the layperson.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>License</i>
<i>Psychologist</i>	<i>Masters or Doctorate</i>	<i>LCP (Licensed Clinical Psychologist)</i>
<i>Counselor</i>	<i>Masters or Doctorate</i>	<i>LCPC (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor) LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor)</i>
<i>Marriage and Family</i>	<i>Masters or Doctorate</i>	<i>LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist)</i>
<i>Social Worker</i>	<i>Masters or Doctorate</i>	<i>LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker)</i>
<i>Psychiatrist</i>	<i>Medical Doctorate</i>	<i>MD</i>

The staff member that you see may have one of more of these degrees and licenses. We work to assure that you will be matched with the person who's training fits best with your needs. Heartland Counseling is a teaching clinic, which means that we also offer services from master's or doctoral-level graduate interns and residents in the mental health professions. They have received several years of training in the field and are closely supervised by experienced staff. Interns can work on a sliding scale, for those who don't have, or don't want to use their insurance.



Heartland FAQ

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Heartland Counseling

What will a typical appointment be like?

During your first appointment for psychotherapy/counseling your counselor will need a summary of the problems or questions that have brought you to counseling in order to work with you to establish goals and an appropriate treatment plan for your counseling. Adults will meet alone with the counselor. Children and adolescents will usually have some time with the parent present and some time alone with the counselor; a session that allows observation of and discussion among family members may also be held. The counselor will want to hear your history, including: family history and dynamics, significant relationships, work, substance use, cultural background, major losses, traumas, medical issues and any other information that may prove helpful. Parents will be asked to provide information about their child's developmental history, schooling and social relationships, as well as other information that may be relevant to the difficulties the child is experiencing.

If your referral question is very specific (for example, a fear of flying) one session will usually be enough to provide the necessary information to develop a treatment plan. If it is more complicated (for example, serious marital conflict or a long history of unsuccessful relationships) more time will be needed for the two of you to develop a plan. Though the first session may be more than an hour, subsequent sessions will be 50 minutes. This leaves your counselor 10 minutes to take notes and prepare for his or her next appointment.

Although your counselor will likely ask questions and lead the discussion during the first appointment it is important for you to take the lead as much as possible in future appointments. Your counselor will often wait to see if you have important issues you would like to bring up in any given session. It is a good idea for you to report on progress or setbacks and to let your counselor know of any significant events since your last appointment, and provide honest feedback to the counselor regarding your treatment.

Can I receive a reduced fee?

Heartland Counseling is a not-for-profit organization. We raise funds to help us provide affordable services for people with limited resources. If you do not have mental health insurance benefits, and cannot afford the full fee for counseling we have a support fund to help cover the costs of counseling. We must be accountable with these limited funds so we ask that you complete a brief application to demonstrate financial need. We also welcome donations for our support fund. Our sliding scale services are provided by closely supervised Psychology interns and residents.

What should I do if I am not satisfied with something about my counseling?

The most important thing to remember in counseling is that you are in charge! If you are not satisfied in any way, bring up your questions or frustrations with your counselor. Your counselor may be able to make changes to satisfy your concerns. It is important that a counselor and client "fit" well together and your counselor will want to know of your frustrations so that he or she can attempt to improve your relationship.

Psychotherapy/counseling often stirs up powerful feelings. The themes and patterns from other areas of your life may show up in therapy. Please be open and honest with your counselor about such feelings. He or she has been trained to understand such feelings and not to take them personally.

If you and your counselor are not able to resolve your differing expectations to your satisfaction, your counselor will assist in helping to assign you to someone new, within or outside our agency. We work carefully to affiliate with only the most ethical and competent professionals. However, in the event that you feel that your care has been inadequate or that your counselor or another staff member has behaved unethically or unprofessionally please notify the clinic director or the executive director. We certainly want to know of your concerns and will take them seriously.

What is a psychological assessment?

Psychological assessment is sometimes called psychological testing. It involves a group of standardized tests that are used to answer complicated questions about diagnosis. Common reasons for referral for a psychological assessment would include questions about ADHD, learning disabilities, Asperger's disorder, autism, schizophrenia, memory impairment, depression or anxiety, bipolar disorder, conduct disorder, Alzheimer's disease, dementia or personality disorders. We can also provide psychological assessments for employment screening and evaluation.

Can you prescribe medications?

Only physicians can prescribe medications in Illinois. If you and your counselor believe that medications might be helpful to you we will be happy to provide a referral to a psychiatrist or consult with your general practitioner or a physician of your choice. Your therapist will be able to help you monitor the effectiveness of medications your physician prescribes in order to help you and your physician find the right medication for you.

Can I receive Christian Counseling at Heartland?

All of the counselors at Heartland Counseling are Christians. That does not mean that Christian faith will be made an explicit part of all counseling at Heartland. Faith and spirituality are an important part of many people's lives and should be as much a part of counseling as you are comfortable with, but this will never be pushed on you. Different counselors approach this in different ways and try to adjust to the preferences of each client. If you would like to discuss your faith and your relationship with God in counseling, your counselor would welcome that. We also ask that you give us permission to consult with your pastor or other spiritual adviser.

No one at Heartland practices "Biblical Counseling" (also called Nouthetic Counseling). That name has come to be associated with a method of using the Bible in the counseling session to educate the client about his/her sin and the ways that he/she needs to eliminate the sins that are causing psychological distress. Heartland staff members will use Biblically informed counseling which means that it will be consistent with Christian teaching about human nature and about the way that God wants us to live. Please be assured, however, that your counselor will not "preach" to you or judge you.

Counselors and clients sometimes disagree about values—that will happen at any counseling center—but your counselor will treat you with respect and will value your right to your own beliefs and morals.

If you are a Christian and you would like to make integration of Christian faith and practice an explicit part of your therapy please discuss this with your counselor. Do not expect your counselor to assume that you would like to do that. Some of our counselors have training and experience in biblical theology and spiritual formation. If you request it, your counselor may be able to recommend helpful books or spiritual practices or to help you understand how other issues in your life relate to your relationship with God. Your counselor may also be willing to pray with you if you request it.

How often should I come to counseling?

Most people find that they achieve greater results with greater frequency of appointments, especially in the beginning. This means that your counselor will probably suggest that you meet weekly. As you experience progress toward your goals you, and your counselor may decide to meet less frequently, but often enough to maintain progress. When goals have been reached, many clients like to come occasionally, to prevent relapse, until new patterns are firmly established in their life. Your insurance provider may have restrictions about frequency or maximum number of appointments: please familiarize yourself with any such requirements. And, like a family doctor, we are here for you if you should need us again in the future for help with another problem. Feel free to discuss your preferences for frequency with your counselor at any time.

How long will I need to be in counseling?

There is no single answer to this question. Many people fear that they will become dependent on counseling and that they will never want to stop. Other people fear that their counselor will try to keep them coming longer than they want to. It is important that you be open with your counselor about any such fears or expectations. It is important that you know that you are in charge of your counseling. When you feel that you have accomplished as much as you want from counseling please let your therapist know and the two of you will plan for termination of treatment. For some people that may take as little as a few sessions. Others may continue for months or years, often with increased periods of time between appointments. We recommend that you follow through with counseling until you have accomplished the goals that you and your counselor discussed at the beginning. If you find at any time that you would like to terminate your counseling we do recommend that you schedule at least one last appointment to discuss your progress and how to maintain it in the future.