

Appendix M - Guidelines for Providing Counseling

- Limited number of sessions, generally no more than 4 or 5 on any particular life issue.
- Don't go outside your area of expertise. Refer to a psychologist, credentialed professional, medical doctor, or mental health professional.
- If you are separately credentialed and/or licensed as a mental health professional (psychologist, marriage and family therapist, substance abuse counselor, etc.) you should clearly separate those two roles and communicate to all concerned when you are functioning in each role. The counseling practice should not use the Church letterhead, should have a different bank account and ideally a separate geographic location.
- Clergy separately credentialed should not serve as mental health professionals for members of their own congregation. This policy recognizes that the counseling session should be a safe space in which the counselee is able to engage in vulnerable sharing of personal material. This sharing often involves complex relational dynamics which are best observed and discussed only within the counseling session. Regularly encountering one's counselor during worship or serving together on a church committee seriously complicates the counseling relationship and increases the possibility that confidences could be violated or other forms of misconduct could occur.
- If you practice as a separately credentialed and/or licensed mental health professional while serving in the Church, you must maintain in full force separate professional insurance coverage at all times for any work you do outside your church role. The insurance must name of your church employer or church for whom you function in Pastoral Relationships as an additional insured. You must provide evidence of such insurance to your church employer or church for which you function in Pastoral Relationships annually.