

Minutes of Connections Counseling Board of Directors Meeting

February 2, 2017

Attendance

Present: Laura Wall, Marie Vieth, Shannon Hamrick

Absent: none –A quorum was established

Presiding Officers

10:40 Laura called the meeting to order. Shannon offered an opening prayer.

Brad has resigned from the board and is now “Acting Vice President” until a replacement is found

Shannon acted as secretary of the meeting.

Agenda Items for Discussion:

- State of the Organization
- New Board Members
- New Counselors
- Subsidy Fund

State of the Organization

There are 4 counselors + Laura – a solid group, get along well, work together well, provide accountability for each other (see addendum, State of the Organization)

Laura described 2 different models she has explored in the greater Seattle area – one that is growing, the other that is maintaining a small presence and doing it well.

- Currently, CC fits the second model
- Laura would like a stronger presence, more active outreach – Right now, that vision isn't happening
- Discussion ensued regarding how to spread the word about CC's existence & mission. Ideas generated included
 - Seeking board members with skills in marketing and outreach, as well as passion for the mission of the organization – to help deepen and grow the organization
 - Continuing to brainstorm with the counselors in monthly meetings how they might include CC in their talks, workshops, marketing opportunities
 - Adding Connections Counseling to counselors' business cards

Laura explained that she and Katie are the only itinerant counselors, meeting in churches – Peter, Jenn and Gretchen have their own private offices. Also noted was the fact that churches with dedicated counseling space work best at this point (Shoreline, Redmond, Aldersgate); other churches have offered space but the space itself is not conducive to counseling (UTemple, Lake WA).

Laura made and Marie seconded the following motion: Connections Counseling will pay for half the cost of new business cards for the counselors so they will add CC to their business cards. This will be discussed further with counselors.

A vote was called and passed unanimously.

Action items for Laura:

- Discuss with the counselors the idea of attending one outreach event each year to do marketing for Connections Counseling
- Discuss with the counselors having Connections Counseling added to their business cards

Potential New Board Members

The following names were mentioned as persons worth reaching out to. Board members will continue to think and pray about other potential Board candidates.

- Beryl Ingram
- Christian Hamson
- Linda Detering

Action Item: Laura will follow up with these and other possible board members regarding their availability and willingness to serve on the CC Board. Laura will also ask counselors to continue to think and pray about who they know who may be a great fit for the Board.

Potential New Counselors

Laura reported that Pat Simpson's daughter Mary reached out to Laura to be included in CC – she lives in proximity to Ronald UMC, which needs to be populated with a counselor. Mary has great credentials—graduated from Seattle University's Pastoral Counseling program,, is a licensed Marriage Family Therapist Associate, has a supervisor, and is actively involved in the Conference.

Adam Schneider is another potential counselor – Laura's shift mate at work. Laura wants to discuss the possibility with him. He is younger than the current counselors, which is seen as an advantage – to have a span of ages in the organization. He will graduate from The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology this Spring, is an Analytical therapist who has published a paper on John Wesley, and is very skilled with clients.

Action items:

- Counselors will discuss bringing on new counselors; how to vet, what they feel about it.
- If approved by the counselors, Laura will approach Adam about the possibility of working with Connections Counseling, then begin a more formal interview process as needed.
- If approved by the counselors, Laura will initiate the interview process with Mary.

- As new counselors are brought on, they will be asked to covenant with churches who provide them with dedicated counseling space, to provide annual or bi-annual services such as sermons, workshops, etc.

Subsidy Fund

The fund has \$5,552.89, and is currently receiving a \$600/month donation.

Laura historically has been the only one to draw upon the subsidy fund and has not done so for some time.

One of the counselors previously expressed concern about offering subsidies to a client without knowing there would be ongoing funds for them to continue therapy.

CC's current model for reimbursement is that any counselor can ask for up to \$200 per month from the subsidy fund. Lutheran Counseling reimburses up to \$60/session. Laura suggested that the reimbursement rate be raised to \$60/month, and the maximum allotment be raised to \$240/month.

Laura moved and Marie seconded the following motion: The reimbursement rate is raised to \$60 per session, with a maximum of \$240 per month per counselor.

A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussed use of the subsidy fund in light of the uncertainty of how long the fund will last and when it will be replenished. All agreed that the fund should be used, as it is part of the mission of CC – and the donors to the fund expect the money to be in service to clients. The idea of a short-term structure was discussed, that allows counselors to provide assurance to clients for 12 weeks at a time, with the option of renewing subsidized counseling if funds are available. 12 weeks of subsidized counseling is similar to what many community mental health providers offer in terms of “brief” counseling and this often takes the form of specific classes such as a 12-week class on PTSD (Sound Mental Health), parenting, and so forth. While this may not be ideal it affords a guarantee of funding, with the option to renew for another 12 weeks at a time as the fund is checked for continuing health.

Note: With the current balance in the subsidy fund, all 5 counselors could invoice for the \$240 monthly amount for up to 4 months.

Marie moved and Shannon seconded the following motion: Counselors can use subsidy funds for up to 12 weeks at a time per client when the client demonstrates need as worked out with each counselor, and the client can then re-apply as needed. The counselors will invoice for the funds needed after seeing clients.

A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussed use of funds to fix up the Shoreline office, similar to the funds discussed via email (11/5-7/2016) regarding the Redmond office. All agreed that some of the funds should be used to make the Shoreline office more hospitable and welcoming for both clients and counselors, particularly if Mary is approved to join and decides to use the Shoreline office.

Marie moved and Laura seconded the following motion: Up to \$750 of the subsidy fund may be used to fix up the Shoreline office, at Laura's discretion.

A vote was called and the use of funds for Shoreline passed unanimously.

Action items:

- Laura will communicate the subsidy fund changes to the counselors and encourage them to use the fund.
- Laura will make the Shoreline office more user-friendly for counselors and clients.
- Marie and Laura agreed to jointly re-assess the subsidy fund in 6 months' time, at the end of June.

Reimbursement for Treasurer

Marie renewed her offer to donate her services for the 2017 calendar year.

11:45 Laura called the meeting to a close.

State of Connections Counseling:

Summary of where we are in 2017

For counselors, this organization currently provides benefit in two main ways:

1. Provides a small consult group of spiritually trained counselors who can support one another in their practice as well as their personal development.
2. Offers free space within churches for counselors to meet with clients.
 - a. This has always been with the understanding that counselors who make use of this benefit are in relationship with the church, and are offering their services in some way—a workshop, a sermon, etc.—as worked out individually with the church.

Note: At the moment, only Katie and Laura are making use of church space to meet with clients—Laura at Aldersgate and Redmond UMC, Katie at Redmond UMC, and Pilgrim’s church in Capital Hill (not a UMC church). Katie also has her own separate office, as do the other counselors (other than Laura).

We are not currently providing an onsite presence with some churches that have wanted us onsite; this is one reason to potentially bring other counselors on board.

For clients, the organization offers:

1. Spiritually-informed counseling (per client preference).
2. The ability to offer subsidized counseling for clients with limited ability to pay.

For churches—and particularly persons contributing to the subsidy fund—this organization offers:

A network of spiritually trained counselors that:

- Pastors can trust as a referral source.
- See low-income clients (dependent on the health of the subsidy fund).
- Offer classes, workshops and retreats to the church communities.
- Offer mental-health consultation to pastors regarding persons they encounter in their pastoral ministry.