

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC is designed to provide treatment services in a culturally competent manner to those person(s) who desire support and intervention related to the challenges and stresses that life can bring. The philosophy that support and intervention is based on is related to the stage of change model; treatment is based upon the client's motivational stage. The over-arching goal of the treatment is to foster healthy and adaptive self-choice. This also extends to the realization that the provider and the client are aware that the use of medication is a tool for support and will not take the place of doing work outside of medication management appointments. This means individual therapy and using non-pharmacological interventions discussed in appointments.

CLIENT COMMITMENT

Client commits to:

1. Attend scheduled appointments on time;
2. Give a 24-hour notice, if an appointment has to be missed;
3. Participate in his/her treatment planning;
4. Engage in treatment work outside of appointments

RULES OF BEHAVIOR

Threatening and violent behavior are not permitted during sessions. The use of alcohol or other substances during sessions, or prior to sessions, is also not permitted. If there is a concern about safety or an individual being under the influence of a substance, the session will be terminated and a plan will be created with all parties involved to ensure safety for all participants and providers.

REASONS FOR DISCHARGE FROM TREATMENT

1. Successful completion of treatment. A mutual decision between the client and therapist is reached services are no longer needed.
2. Voluntary termination from the program. Either a transfer or discontinuance of treatment. The client reaches this decision.
3. Discharge from the program due to treatment non-compliance.
4. Inappropriate Behavior (see above).

Patient's Bill of Rights

As a person receiving mental health services, it is important that you know your rights in treatment.

You have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity and respect.
2. Ask questions and get answers about services.
3. Participate fully in all decisions about treatment or services.
4. Request changes in treatment or services.
5. Refuse treatment or service or terminate services at any time.
6. Be informed about the rules that will result in discharge from services if violated.
7. Have your family involved in your treatment.
8. If you are an adult refuse family participation in your treatment, if you choose (this is sometimes unavoidable for those under the age of 18).
9. Not be subjected to verbal, physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse; harsh or unfair treatment.
10. Not be discriminated against on the basis of race, age, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or marital status.

Medical Monitoring

The connection between medical and physical health cannot be understated or underestimated. Often the impact of what is happening to a person physically may have an underlying medical issue. For this reason, if there has been any recent bloodwork that has been done from your Primary Care Provider, please have them forwarded to the office so that new bloodwork does not need to be completed. In an effort to decrease the amount of unnecessary bloodwork, please ensure that your Primary Care Provider at your yearly physical and the prescriber are in communication to obtain all important and necessary lab work.

Despite the best efforts to utilize medications that will provide intervention for the symptoms you are seeking relief from; these medications can come with side effects. Depending on the medication there are requirements for lab work to monitor for the development of any side effects. The schedule of lab work will depend on the medication that you are being treated with. However, there may be specialty labs that are needed above what your Primary Care Provider may order at your yearly physical.

Coordination between your Primary Care Provider and Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC to ensure all labs are taken at your physical to avoid going to an outside lab facility.

Depending on the medication you are taking, lab work for monitoring of therapeutic monitoring of medication will be necessary and required if it is not done by your Primary Care Provider. Unfortunately, this is not something that can be avoided.

Lastly, there may be situations where there is a need for an EKG (i.e. if you are taking a medication that can affect heart rate/rhythms and there are potential complications or if there is a history of cardiac issues). These can be done in conjunction with your PCP or through an order to a lab service.

Attendance Policy

Appointments for new medication management clients are scheduled for 60 minutes. In the event that the intake cannot be completed a follow-up appointment will be scheduled. Return appointments for medication checks are scheduled for either 30 or 45 minutes, depending on the current need of the individual. Please note that I will try and accommodate your schedule in terms of timing of appointments. However, this will not always be feasible and attending appointment may require flexibility on your part.

If you need to cancel an appointment, please do so 24 hours in advance to allow for others to take advantage of the opening. If an appointment is canceled with less than 24 hours' notice, a cancellation fee of \$60 will be due before another appointment can be scheduled. Multiple missed appointments can result in discontinuation of services.

Please make every effort to be on time to your appointment. If you are not able to make the appointment on time (i.e. stuck in traffic, accident etc.) please call/text/email Jennifer.

If you arrive more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, your appointment may be rescheduled and a cancellation fee will apply.

Telepsychiatry Appointments

There are very clear guidelines under which Telepsych appointments can be performed. Platforms like Facetime or Skype are NOT compliant with these guidelines.

Please note that Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC is only permitted to provide services to clients who are located in New Hampshire, regardless of in-person or telepsychiatry formats.

All Telepsychiatry appointments must:

- 1) Be approved as a method of service delivery by the managed care company/insurance
- 2) At the current time appointments are held through Doxy.me or Zoom
- 3) Telehealth appointments are the same length of time as a regular in-office follow-up appointment
- 4) Telehealth appointments have the same policy with regard to missed appointment fees*

Issues with technology will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis

Financial Responsibility Policy

- 1) I understand that Jennifer M. Shuart/Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC does not balance bill for fees.
- 2) I understand that it is my responsibility to provide Stepping Stones to Well-Being, LLC with accurate and up-to-date information related to any changes in my insurance coverage as soon as it is known to me or at the time of my next visit.
- 3) I understand that any co-pays for visits are due at the time of the appointment.
- 4) I understand that if an appointment is missed or not canceled within 24 hours, a missed visit fee of \$60.00 will be charged.
- 5) I understand the missed appointment fee of \$60.00 must be paid before a new appointment can be scheduled.
- 6) Co-payments and appointment fees can be paid through Credit/Debit, Health Care Savings account, Check, Cash, or PayPal to: info@stepping-stones-2-wellbeing.com
- 7) Payments can also be made through Square with an invoice that is emailed to you if you would prefer.
- 8) I authorize my insurance plan to pay benefits directly to Stepping Stones to Well-Being, LLC.
- 9) I authorize Stepping Stones to Well-Being, LLC to release pertinent information related to my treatment to my insurance company when requested, or to facilitate payment of benefits.

Schedule II and IV Prescription Medications

Prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) are state-based electronic databases that contain information on controlled substance prescriptions dispensed by pharmacies and prescribers. These programs can help reduce the misuse and “diversion”—the redirection of drugs from legal, medically authorized uses to illegal uses—of controlled substances, including prescription opioids. PDMPs allow prescribers and pharmacists, as well as other individuals and entities (such as researchers, health insurers, and medical licensing boards) that are authorized to access the data, to monitor controlled substance use by patients, the prescribing practices of medical practitioners, and population-level drug use trends (US DOJ, DEA, Diversion Control Division).

It is a requirement as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner that the PDMP is reviewed by the prescriber to obtain, and maintain, licensure and certification. The PDMP provides information for up to 1 year from the date that it is being searched. In some cases, data from surrounding states is also readily available, while for others it can be requested. Lastly, PDMPs will provide information including the number and name of prescribers, the refill dates, the pharmacies used, and the number of pills/tablets/capsules dispensed.

While there may be a number of prescription medications that are monitored, the use of Schedule II and IV medications is the majority of what is used in medication evaluation and management services. Schedule II and IV medications can include, but are not limited to: Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin, Ativan, Xanax, Valium, and in some cases Gabapentin. A more comprehensive list can be found here: <https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/>

The use of stimulants and anti-anxiety medication is not something that is decided lightly and individuals may vary based on their presentation and treatment plan needs. As a best practice, medications like Ativan, Xanax, Valium, and Klonopin are best used for short-term intervention to avoid a number of effects including physical tolerance and longer-term effects including memory impairment. Every effort will be made with each individual to create a treatment plan that seeks to alleviate symptoms while also reducing the potential risk of long-term side effects. However, this may mean that for some medications may not be an option while for others that medications will be utilized for short-term use only.

Please feel free to ask questions.

Prescription Medications

Initial/Changing Prescriptions

Prescriptions will be sent electronically and directly to the pharmacy that you indicate. When starting a prescription for the first time a one-month supply will be sent and a follow-up appointment will be scheduled to evaluate the response to the medication and any changes will be determined at the follow-up appointment.

Prior Authorizations

There are times when an insurance company/prescription plan requires a Prior Authorization for a medication. This can be for initiation or even continuing a medication. This process can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days or weeks. Please allow for additional time when you are planning for medication initiation.

Prior Authorizations can also be required when changing from one medication to another; even if the medications treat the same diagnoses. At times these can be denied. You have the option of either paying out of pocket for a medication or discussing if another medication would be appropriate.

Refill Prescriptions

When possible, electronic refills will be sent during your appointment, unless it is a new medication that you are starting. Any requests for refills should be made between the hours of 8AM and 7PM Monday-Thursday. Any requests on Friday, Saturday or Sunday will be completed on the next business day. From the time a refill request is received please allow at least 48 hours to complete the refill request. If you know that you are running low on medication, please do not wait until the last minute to request a refill as it will result in a delay in your ability to obtain the medication.

Please also note that there may be times when a refill is not able to be sent (i.e. if there have been missed appointments or you haven't been seen for a follow-up appointment) until coming in for a scheduled appointment.

Refills for those who are 18 years old and under are required to have a height and weight with the prescription. To reduce delay in a refill, providing this information at the time of the request.

Medication Changes

Medication changes will **NOT** take place outside of appointment times (i.e. through email).

Treatment Planning and Compliance

The use of medication as a tool for management of symptoms is a personal choice, and one that is not easily made.

Medications are helpful as symptoms of mental health impact daily life. While medications discussed with providers and there is an agreed upon treatment plan, it is understandable that treatment plans may need to be adjusted in accordance with symptoms. In some circumstances, these adjustments can be made in emergency situations; but overall, the changes will be made at scheduled appointments.

Every effort is made by the prescriber to provide information related to the risks and benefits of treatment plans and additional information regarding medications can be found through using reputable websites like Medscape or the medication manufacturer's website. Often, medications are used "off label," meaning for something other than what the FDA has approved them for. The use of medications off label is based on clinical appropriateness and medical necessity as well as review of appropriate scientific literature. Unfortunately, the potential to predict **all** side effects to medications that may be experienced is improbable and it is important that you are in communication with the prescriber if you are experiencing any change to your physical health.

The discontinuation or addition of medications (i.e. taking additional dosages of the same medication or discontinuation of medication without discussion with the prescriber), without discussion with the prescriber can result in serious consequences, both medically and psychologically. I understand that this can place undue harm to myself/my child.

By signing the consent to treatment page in the client packet, I am conveying my understanding that changing a medication regimen (i.e. adding or decreasing dosages) without talking with the prescriber can* result in my termination from services.

*Conversations and determinations will be on a case-by-case basis

Therapeutic Intervention, Availability & Scheduling

Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC has been working with some Masters in Nursing programs to be an educational preceptor/placement site for students who are learning to prescribe medication. ***Please know that it is your decision as the client/parent/caregiver if you feel comfortable with a student being present for appointments. If you do not feel comfortable, this will in no way affect your care and treatment,*** but please let Jennifer know. If there is something that comes up in the course of an appointment and you would prefer a student not to be present, please feel confident that you can share this without fear or worry that you are impacting your treatment. Students understand the delicate nature of mental health and are respectful of individual feelings and decisions.

Appointments through Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC. for medication management are scheduled for a minimum of 60 minutes for an individual intake and 30 minutes for a follow-up appointment. There may be times where follow-up visits are needed for more complex situations and are scheduled for 45 minutes.

If needed, family meetings are scheduled and can be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. Pending scheduling and availability there is a potential to participate in outside meetings (i.e. IEP, treatment team meetings, etc.). Every effort will be made to participate in meetings schedule permitting.

While the appointment times may be longer in length than some other providers, they are not meant to replace the role and support of individual and/or family therapy. At the current time there is not a requirement that individuals participate in individual or family therapy in order to engage in services through Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC. However, there may be times where this is recommended or necessary in order to continue services. This will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

There may be times when it is necessary to make a change in your treatment team. Stepping Stones to Well Being, LLC seeks to provide quality treatment that is also ethical and within the scope and bounds of the knowledge of providers. There may be times when a discussion of changing the treatment team to a provider who may have more knowledge/expertise is appropriate and necessary for your overall health.