

Counseling for Event Acceptance

With an Event Assessment revealing concerns regarding suicidal thoughts, ideations, or past attempts, the National Reviewers may require (depending on the individual situation) as an additional condition - a counselor/therapist assessment before final acceptance. This may be required, even if the event director and Reliant are still in favor of moving forward toward acceptance.

As a potential condition for acceptance, Reliant would ask the applicant to sign a release waiver with their counselor/therapist. This waiver would then allow the Collegiate Reviewer (or both collegiate reviewer and local pastor) to be able to contact the counselor/therapist and get their thoughts and current assessment on their emotional stability (we cannot ask for their recommendation as that would be too much liability for them) on the applicant attending the program (or not). Reliant wants the collegiate reviewer to be on the waiver because we want to have the ability to contact the counselor/therapist to keep the lines of communication open over the entire course of the event, if a follow-up conversation ever becomes necessary. However, Reliant would be open to allowing a local pastor to be that person listed on the waiver if the local pastor is also attending the program with the applicant and will continue following up with them.

The applicant's acceptance approval by the Reliant National reviewers could be conditional on the participant signing the release waiver, thereby giving the program director/local pastor the ability to talk with the counselor/therapist. If the applicant does not want to sign the release waiver, then this may possibly be deemed an unwillingness to co-operate (which may possibly be construed that they are potentially hiding something) and Reliant may decide that it is not willing to accept them for liability reasons. If the counselor/therapist does not give a positive assessment of the applicant attending the program, then generally Reliant will not accept the applicant for the program.

If the counselor/therapist current assessment does not show emotional stability for the applicant for attending the program, but the collegiate reviewer is still not convinced that the applicant should be accepted (even after talking to the counselor/therapist), then Reliant reserves the right to not accept the applicant.

In most cases, the applicant is already seeing a counselor. This is standard procedure for the counselor to talk to someone (we recommend the program director or if need be the local pastor) about their client. Once the participant signs the release the counselor is able to communicate with that person to discuss the current assessment with their client to attend the program over the summer.

If the participant is not seeing a counselor/therapist, then Reliant may ask that they go see a licensed counselor in order to move forward with our conditions for acceptance. But, we also understand that a counselor/therapist may not want to make an assessment after just one or two therapy sessions and Reliant will need to take that into consideration on how to move forward from there.

These types of scenarios will be treated on a case-by-case basis. Reliant may potentially move forward with provisionally accepting an applicant prior to the conditional acceptance criteria being completed. Reliant may do this with the caveat that we could still potentially withdraw initial acceptance from the applicant if after any condition(s) are met and we still later decide that the applicant should not attend the program. Reliant suggests that the local pastor at least have the applicant state that they are willing to move forward, with understanding this above condition, before Reliant officially accepts them. The final decision is left in the collegiate reviewer's hands to say if they would prefer that Reliant wait until the condition(s) have been fully met and discussed before moving forward. Or if the national reviewer feels comfortable, Reliant can move forward knowing we could potentially retract our acceptance at a later time.

Asking for Counselor's Recommendation

Here are instructions for how to ask the event applicant for their counselor's assessment for a Reliant program: This would typically be sent to a representative from the local church leadership that the program applicant is from, that would then meet with the applicant and give them this information to pass on to the counselor.

The local church leadership would set up a meeting with the applicant and explain the following:

- Share with the applicant that we are excited for him/her to have this opportunity.
- Discuss that we want to make the program a success for them.
- Explain that there are some condition(s) that he/she needs to meet in order to be accepted.
- Explain to him/her the needed assessment from his/her counselor/therapist and how to obtain that (*see instructions below*).
- Explain that we will need to wait for the collegiate reviewer to review the counselor's assessment before we move forward.
- Explain to them that if he/she is conditionally accepted, one of the conditions is generally to meet with a staff member for # of weekly meetings for check-in, accountability, and to care for him/her.
- There may also be a request to continue counseling remotely with their counselor or to meet with a local counselor during the program.
- After the meeting, respond back to the collegiate reviewer with how the meeting went, and if he/she agrees to those condition(s).



Reliant needs a current assessment and safety plan by the counselor/therapist stating that their client (the applicant) is currently emotionally stable. We would also like for the counselor and applicant to create a safety plan that can be shared with Reliant and the program.

The applicant, as the client, would need to sign a release waiver with their counselor for the collegiate reviewer to be able to interact with the counselor. Once the he/she signs the release waiver, the counselor is able to communicate with the program director (via email or mail) with their assessment. Email or a letter, would be best in order for the director to have the assessment in writing. If we can get this ASAP, that would be great! We do not need to know any private personal information about what he/she is discussing in counseling. Just whether or not the counselor feels they are currently emotionally stable. Let them know that they can also contact the program director with questions.

Letter from Counselor/Therapist

If the counselor does not specifically state that the written assessment to the collegiate reviewer may not be forwarded or shared, then Reliant would like to have a copy of the assessment to keep for their records. Thus, if the counselor notes that this may only be shared with the collegiate reviewer, then Reliant will put the decision in the collegiate reviewer's hands to make the decision as to whether or not they recommend acceptance of the applicant based on the counselor's assessment (as not to break the confidentiality agreement). If the collegiate reviewer sees any reason based on the counselor's assessment, not to accept the applicant, then the collegiate reviewer would need to make the decision to not accept the participant.



This is a sample letter of support from a counselor. It was written and discussed together with the program participant needing a counselor's assessment to show that the participant also agrees with the content within the letter.



Dear [Name of Collegiate Reviewer],

[Participant Name] has participated in [#] of mental health therapy sessions with me since [start date]. [Participant Name] attends weekly therapy to address managing [list of concerns: anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, etc.] During [Participant Name] time in therapy he/she has worked on developing healthy coping skills such as, journaling, positive imagery, challenging irrational thought patterns, setting boundaries, assertive communication, mindfulness calming/relaxation techniques, and healthy emotional awareness and expression. [Participant Name] plans to attend weekly therapy for the remainder of the spring semester [year] with [Name of Counselor and Counseling Group].

At this time, [Participant Name] denies active suicidal ideations and denies active thoughts to self-harm. He/she agrees to seek help and communicate with support systems if thoughts of suicide or self-harm arise.

The following is a list of support people to contact:

[Name of friend]

[Name of family member]

[Participant Name] agrees to practice daily self-care for him/her mental health by engaging in the following activities: journaling, prayer, listening to music, being around friends, be outdoors-taking walks. [Participant Name] also plans to meet with program staff during the summer program to check-in.

[Participant Name] was provided with crisis contact information: 1-800-273-TALK (the national suicide prevention lifeline), where she/he can access local crisis counselors. [Participant Name] agrees to contact crisis counselors and/or go to the nearest emergency room if needed during the summer program if she/he presents with a mental health crisis.

Sincerely,

[Name of Counselor and Participant Name]

Download sample letter [here](#) to send to counselor/participant needing counselor's assessment.



All participants with suicidal concerns that are accepted into the program are required to fill out this safety plan. A copy of this plan will be given to the participant, the event directors, the program leader assigned to meet with the participant (if different than a program director) and Reliant.



Patient Safety PlanTemplate.pdf

CONDITIONS FOR SUICIDAL CONCERNS

- The most common condition for all applicants in the counselor review is to also ask them to meet with a staff member bi-weekly during the summer to help keep them accountable and to follow up with how they are doing.
- For those participants that have severe emotional struggles we also suggest that a follow up takes place with the participant (preferable around 2 weeks before the event) to confirm that their condition has not negatively changed and to receive any updates to help us prepare to care for the participant better during the program.
- We also ask the applicant to turn in a safety plan.



After a participant with a concern of suicidal thoughts is accepted into the program, these conditions below are for the event director to follow. These are Reliant's normal protocol for suicidal concerns once the participant has been accepted.

- Review the shepherding google doc and safety plan for the participant. The safety plan will be located in the one-drive safety plan folder.
- Arrange weekly meetings with a program leader that is a mature, seasoned leader who has had experience with suicidal discussions. Make sure the leader knows who to contact and what questions to ask if the concern heightens.
- Have that leader meeting with the participant update a document (shepherding google document) with details from the weekly discussions (or they can update the event director who can then update the document) that is shared with the event leaders and Reliant. We want to have everything in writing to show that we have done our due diligence in caring for this individual appropriately.
- Request that they meet with a counselor on-site at the program if at all possible.

Safety Plan



Patient Safety PlanTemplate (1).pdf

Counseling during the program

Many counselors can not continue meeting with their client during the program if they are attending a summer program out of state because when they cross state lines they do not have a license to practice counseling in that state. However, there are some counselors do allow for FaceTime meetings or phone calls. If the participant can continue meetings with their counselor over the summer we highly recommend that they continue meeting.



Estes Park Center- YMCA

For Estes Park LT: On site pastoral counseling- free of charge to YMCA employees at the Leggett Christian Center. Can ask students to do weekly meetings.

Silver Bay- YMCA

For Adirondack LT: On site chaplain at the YMCA (Bruce Tamlyn) is also a certified counselor.

Snow Mountain Ranch-YMCA

Some program locations, such as the YMCA of the Rockies - Snow Mountain Ranch (Reliant's LT summer program in Winter Park, Colorado) offer counseling services available to their staff (all LT program participants are hired by the YMCA so they would all have this resource at this program location).

For this summer program, any participant could access Mind Springs Health - Granby, CO during their Open Access hours to initial treatment /therapy.

<https://www.mindspringshealth.org/treatment-services/locations/granby/>

Reliant's usual condition for any emotional and psychiatric concerns is to require the participant to meet with summer program leadership staff for a certain number of weeks over the summer to check in and see how they are doing. Typically the summer program leadership staff that is meeting with the participants is not a licensed counselor. Because of this, Reliant recommends the local summer program leadership review the information below to become familiar with what constitutes an involuntary commitment/mandatory treatment for a person to receive emergency psychiatric care (often resulting in hospitalization) if necessary. This is only if the person themselves does not voluntarily admit themselves and is deemed a danger to themselves (typically in the case of thoughts of suicide or self-harm.) We want to make sure the program leadership is aware that they may need to contact law enforcement if ever such an occasion should arise.



Here is the link for Colorado: <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/browse-by-state/colorado>

Here is the link for New York State: <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/browse-by-state/new-york>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK to access local crisis counselors.