

# NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION



## VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM

Office Hours  
10:00am – 3:00pm  
Monday to Thursday

Volunteer Counselling Sessions are available outside regular office hours.

## Mission Statement

NFLA is a passionate, dynamic, and inclusive community-oriented organization that delivers interconnected personal and professional growth services responsive to the community's needs.

## What Do We Offer?

Counselling sessions are conducted online and last 50 minutes.

Available times range from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. weekdays and weekends.

## Who is Eligible?

Services are available for individuals 19 and older, youth ages 13-18, and couples. Clients must specify their needs within the areas in which our counsellors are equipped to help (listed below).

## Who Provides the Support?

Volunteer Counsellors receive comprehensive training, ongoing learning, and supervision. In addition to our training program, they have completed the Vancouver Island University courses "Counselling Skills" Level 1 & 2 or have obtained equivalency.

## Our volunteers are trained to serve in the areas of:

- Communication
- Assertiveness
- Conflict Resolution
- Anger Management
- Grief and Loss
- Stress Management
- Family Dynamics
- Anxiety and Depression
- Making Changes & Goal Setting
- Trauma
- Relationships
- Boundaries
- Self-Esteem
- Self-Exploration

## What is Counselling?

At NFLA, counselling is a confidential, supportive space where you can explore personal challenges, emotions, and life experiences with the help of a trained volunteer lay counsellor. It's a collaborative process that can help you gain insight, develop coping strategies, improve relationships, and make meaningful changes. Whether you're facing a specific issue or just feeling stuck, counselling offers a safe place to be heard, understood, and supported without judgment.

## How to Apply for Counselling

Getting started is simple. To apply for counselling, complete our one-page intake form, available on our website, via email from NFLA, or in hard copy during office hours.

Once we receive your completed form, you will be contacted to schedule an intake session, which can be completed by telephone or online.

If you are seeking couples counselling, each partner must complete a form. The intake will be done individually.

### During the intake session, we will:

- Learn about your current concerns and goals for counselling;
- Review confidentiality, consent, and your rights as a client;
- Explain agency forms and documentation requirements;
- Assist you with completing electronic forms through our secure email system, if needed;
- Discuss the counselling process and therapeutic approaches available;
- Review sliding-scale fee options;
- Determine the most appropriate counselling services for your needs.

Intake sessions are typically completed within 30 minutes.

Our intake process is designed to reduce barriers to care, provide a welcoming first point of contact, and help connect you with support as quickly as possible. Whenever possible, clients are matched with a counsellor within 48 hours of completing their intake session.

**DUE TO THE VOLUME OF PEOPLE WAITING FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES,  
WE ASK THAT YOU ADHERE TO OUR POLICIES.**

Client Understanding and Agreement Volunteer Counselling Program
I understand that once the coordinator has matched me with a counsellor and the counsellor has contacted me, I need to respond to the counsellor within 3 days to set up my first appointment, or I risk my file being closed. If, for any reason, I am unable to contact the counsellor within 3 days, I can contact the coordinator to be placed back on the waitlist.
I will do my best to give my counsellor 24 hours' notice by leaving a message on their voicemail if I cannot make a session.
If I cannot give my counsellor 24 hours' notice, I will contact the counsellor to request to continue sessions.
I understand that if I cancel my appointment, it is my responsibility to book another appointment with my counsellor within 3 days; otherwise, I risk having my file closed.
I will commit to weekly sessions. I will contact the counsellor if I cannot commit to weekly sessions due to shift work, transportation, etc.
I will not bring others to my counselling session.
I will remain alcohol and drug-free when seeing my counsellor.
I understand that if I stop coming to counselling, my file will be closed. If I wish to connect with a counsellor again, I must complete a new intake form. Note: There is no guarantee I will be matched with the same counsellor, but I can request it.
I understand that if my counsellor is not a good match for me, I can contact the coordinator to be matched with another counsellor.
I am aware that the Volunteer Counselling Program does not offer crisis counselling and cannot provide services immediately. Wait times vary from a few days to several weeks or more. If you are in crisis, please call 1-888-494-3888 or visit the Brooks Landing Crisis Walk-In Clinic at #203 – 2000 N Island Hwy, Nanaimo, BC.
If I plan to visit the office, I understand that if I experience flu-like symptoms or any other contagious health concerns arise, I should stay home.

At Nanaimo Family Life Association, one-on-one, accessible, and affordable counselling is provided by skilled volunteer lay counsellors who undergo an intensive training program.

Our volunteer counsellors are trained in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Family Systems, Person-Centered, and Trauma-Informed practices. They are not trained in specific modalities such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Our volunteer lay counsellors are not clinical or professional counsellors; insurance companies do not cover their services.

Sessions are offered online. This allows you to access counselling from the place that is most convenient for you.

### Benefits of online counselling:

- Research shows that online counselling can be as effective as in-person sessions.
- Online communication gives a sense of increased anonymity; people are quicker to open up about personal issues. Trust is foundational to the success of counselling. For many people, the comfort of being behind a screen can remove barriers to openness that would otherwise slow down traditional counselling.
- The prerequisites for a successful online counselling session are the same as in-person counselling, so don't treat it differently. The need for trust, open communication, and motivation with your counsellor is the same.
- It helps with any stigma around attending counselling sessions, discomfort sitting in waiting rooms, or fears of seeing someone you know.
- Online counselling sessions also mean you can schedule sessions at times that may be more convenient for your schedule.
- It offers greater accessibility for individuals who have mobility challenges and people who experience barriers to leaving their homes.

As a client at Nanaimo Family Life Association, you can expect the following:

Your assigned volunteer lay counsellor will conduct themselves professionally and ethically with appropriate boundaries, such as:

- Not exploiting your trust.
- Providing a non-judgmental environment.
- Not using therapy techniques that they are not trained in.
- Avoiding any personal relationship.
- Being punctual and informing you of any changes to session dates or times at least 24 hours in advance.
- Clearly explaining our services and requesting your signature to confirm your understanding.
- Explaining confidentiality and its limits during your first session.
- Creating a safe space for you to explore and work on your goals.

This ensures respectful and effective support from your counsellor sessions.

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If you have any concerns or questions that you are uncomfortable discussing with your assigned counsellor, please contact the program's coordinator, Ardith Finnamore.

Contact information :

[a\\_finnamore@nflabc.org](mailto:a_finnamore@nflabc.org)

250 754 3331 ext.427

## Counselling Fees

The Nanaimo Family Life Association is a nonprofit organization that offers counselling services to the Nanaimo community. Trained volunteer counsellors deliver these services under the supervision of the Volunteer Counselling Program Coordinator. If your needs aren't fully met here, a counsellor or the program coordinator will help you explore other options.

## Payment Procedures

Please pay your session fee at the end of each session. NFLA collects fees through electronic funds transfer (EFT). Please send your payment to the email address below and use the provided password. Otherwise, your payment may not be received.

payments@nflabc.org  
Password: Counselling

If you are 55+ there is no charge for our counselling services.

If you are unable to pay by EFT please make other arrangements with your counsellor.

Funding for the program comes from various sources, including the BC Gaming Commission, United Way, membership fees, donations, and service fees. The volunteer counsellors do not receive any payment for their counselling work; all fees are reinvested into the Volunteer Counselling Program.

If you're unable to access our services due to financial hardship, assistance might be available. For assistance, please get in touch with Ardith, the VCP Program Coordinator, at 250-754-3331, ext. 427 or email at [a\\_finnamore@nflabc.org](mailto:a_finnamore@nflabc.org).

Here's a guide to the session fees based on your net monthly income.

Monthly Net Income	Payment Per Session
Income under \$ 2,000	\$20.00
\$2,000 to \$3,000	\$30.00
\$3,000 to \$4,000	\$40.00
\$4,000 to 5,000	\$50.00
\$5,000 +	\$60.00

## Counsellor Evaluations

**Evaluations** of your counselling sessions are very important to us. Your counsellor will give you two simple evaluation forms to complete (one midway through and one at the end of your counselling sessions) regarding how you feel about your experience with your counsellor. Your counsellor will only be informed of the evaluation with your permission.

### We Will:

- Keep your personal information private.
- Provide you with an environment dedicated to your mental and emotional well-being.
- Assign a new counsellor if you do not believe your counsellor suits your needs. (If this is the case, please get in touch with the Volunteer Counselling Program Coordinator at ext. 427 or email at [a\\_finnamore@nflabc.org](mailto:a_finnamore@nflabc.org).)
- NFLA offers services in an inclusive, non-discriminatory environment. We do not tolerate discrimination on any grounds. If you believe any representative at NFLA has discriminated against you, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

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## Community Resources

Van Isle Crisis Line	1-888-494-388	Youth & Family Addictions	250-739-5790
Brooks Landing Crisis Counselling	250-739-5710	Tillicum Lelum	250-753-6578

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## ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOPS

Our workshops foster growth through self-awareness in a respectful group setting. They are for adults 19 and older. Each workshop costs \$15. Please get in touch with us if cost is a concern. Below are the workshop descriptions.

**Effective Communication:** Effective communication is defined as individuals intentionally using conversation to find common ground with the person they're speaking with. This workshop will help us understand another person's message and communicate our message clearly.

**Personal Boundaries/Assertiveness:** Boundaries create structure in our lives. They clarify how we want to be treated. These skills can help reduce anxiety in stressful situations and boost self-esteem and confidence.

**Conflict Resolution:** This workshop explores both negative and positive perspectives on conflict and conflict styles, offering constructive strategies to manage conflict.

**Healthy Self-Esteem & Self-Exploration:** Healthy self-esteem involves having a positive sense of your inherent worth as a person. It includes self-confidence, self-worth, and self-respect. It influences everything you do.

**Exploring Anger:** Anger occurs when we see an event as a threat or when we feel frustrated over unmet needs. Feelings of fear, loss, hurt, or sadness usually come before it.

**Exploring Stress:** Stress affects us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It is a natural, useful part of life and survival. However, unmanaged stress can lead to illness. Our way of responding to stressors greatly determines how stress impacts us.

**Exploring Grief & Loss:** In this workshop, we examine the common causes and symptoms of grief, harmful myths and clichés, stages of grief, mourning needs, coping strategies, and exercises for grief work.

**Exploring Anxiety & Depression:** In this workshop, we explore depression and anxiety, focusing on the difference between stress, anxiety, depression, and grief/sadness. We also discuss ways to manage anxiety and depression.

**Creating Personal Change:** This workshop explores positive ways to create change, how self-defeating thoughts and language affect us, understanding what is within our control, discovering our passions and values, and key principles for successful goal setting.

*Thank you for your interest in NFLA's counselling program.  
We look forward to meeting you.*