

USU's Sorenson Center Supports Adults Statewide with Single-Session Consultations

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Single-session consultation provider Marissa Donahue, doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling specialization in the Department of Psychology, with USU student.

The Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence, a community-facing clinical services facility located on USU's Logan campus within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, is now providing one-hour, single-session consultations free of charge. The services are available to adults ages 18 and above, and are supported, in part, through a grant provided by the Bear River Health Department.

The single-session consultations are accessible to adults in both Utah and Idaho. According to research, approximately 20% of Utah adults experience poor mental health, and as many as half of those individuals do not currently receive mental health treatment or counseling. Utah also has a shortage of mental health providers in every county in the state. Community members in Cache, Box Elder, and Rich counties are encouraged to participate in the complimentary service in-person. However, the Sorenson Center is equipped to deliver sessions to anyone in Utah and Idaho via telehealth.

The consultations are based on a model created by Jessica Schleider, PhD, psychologist and director of the Lab for Scalable Mental Health at Northwestern University. Schleider's model assumes that change can, and is expected to, occur in the moment. She emphasizes that clients have the inner capacity to change their thoughts,

emotions, and behaviors, which inherently empowers the individual.

Gretchen Peacock, director of the SCCE and associate dean of CEHS, explains the practicality and inherent value of a single-session consultation. "When people are in the moment with a particular problem or decision, they tend to get stuck. They feel overwhelmed. But most people have it within themselves to come up with some ideas. They just need some assistance with their problem solving. That's the focus of these single-session consultations. We are working to empower the individual to come up with ideas to solve their own problems."



Gretchen Peacock, director the Sorenson Center and associate dean of CEHS, and Marissa Donahue

The sessions are provided by licensed clinicians at the Sorenson Center as well as graduate students in training. Marissa Donahue, a 5th year doctoral graduate student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling specialization in the ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy) Research Group at Utah State, is one of the single-session consultation providers.

"There's evidence to show that brief interventions can result in meaningful behavior change," says Donahue. "Even taking the first step of coming in and speaking about a particular problem—and feeling validated when someone else hears it—can increase awareness, which has a lot of value."

Donahue describes what a session will look like. "Someone might come in and say, 'I'm really stressed.' We'll focus on identifying a more specific problem by identifying contexts and specific goals to ultimately create an action plan together that is solutions focused. There is a commitment that the person will then go and practice the plan."

She continues, "It's common to describe our emotions as happy, stressed, sad, mad. When you meet with someone in a session, you get a chance to more accurately describe and identify what's going on. I think that in itself is an intervention of sorts."

Donahue is optimistic about the results of a single-session consultation. "My hope is that people will take their plans and begin to apply this skillset of identifying solutions to other contexts as needed. If they can find the solution helpful for anxiety around academic performance, can they then apply it to anxiety that shows up in another situation? I believe people can have behavior change without requiring 12 weeks of services."

Peacock acknowledges that the sessions aren't designed to help everyone with every condition. "People need to understand that this isn't therapy. If they are dealing with trauma or thoughts of suicide or severe anxiety, there are other resources available. We understand that an hour consultation is not going to solve everyone's problems. But it can be a positive step forward for a lot of people."

Ultimately, the purpose of the Bear River Health Department's grant to the Sorenson Center is two-fold. "We're trying to get mental health services out to more people who need them," explains Peacock. "We know there is a need for services, and it can be difficult to get into providers, so we want to reach more people. That's our main goal. This is also a good way to give people an introduction to therapy."

In addition to the single-session consultations, the Sorenson Center serves individuals throughout Utah with an extensive array of clinical services, provided both in-person and via telehealth. The services are provided by licensed mental health therapists and graduate students in training who are closely supervised by experienced faculty. While the single-session consultations are provided at no cost, other services are provided on a modest sliding scale fee or insurance may be billed. The center also provides single-day and multi-week group meetings and workshops that are designed to provide support and education for the community. To learn more about its many services, visit the Sorenson Center's [website](#). To sign up for a free single-session consultation, visit this [webpage](#).