



WELCOME

Beginning Therapy Together

Everything you need to know
before we start.

CHRISTINA GIFFIN
CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST

Welcome to Therapy

A LETTER FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

I'm so glad you're here.

I know how important it is to find the right kind of support for your teen. This guide will help you understand what Therapy looks like in my office and how we work together as a team.

My Approach

Teen-centered, Relationship-focused, Non-coercive.

I meet each teen where they are, at their own pace. I do not use coercive techniques, rewards, or behavior charts. Instead, I focus on building a trusting relationship where your teen feels safe, understood, and free to be themselves.

Healing grows in connection, not compliance.



What You Can Expect



A Safe Space

Your teen has their own special time to create, explore and be understood. This might look like doing art, playing games, listening music.



Parent Partnership

You are an important part of the process. We will check-in, problem solve, and find ways to support your teen at home.



Meaningful Growth

Change may be slow and subtle, but it's real. You may notice more emotional regulation, confidence, flexibility, connection and resilience over time.



A Relationship That Heals

Research shows that the quality of the relationship between child and therapist is one of the strongest predictors of positive change.

How You Can Support Your Teen

- ✓ **Trust the process**, even when you don't see immediate change.
- ✓ **Expect some ups and downs**. Working through difficult feelings can sometimes increase emotional dysregulation before meaningful change becomes visible.
- ✓ **Make space for conversations** at home without pressure or judgment.
- ✓ **Celebrate your child's strengths**, efforts, and small victories.
- ✓ **Take care of yourself**. Your well-being helps your child thrive.

Thank you for trusting me with your child's story. I look forward to walking alongside your family.

With Care,

CHRISTINA GIFFIN

ASSOCIATE MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST



Therapeutic Approaches

I MAY DRAW FROM

I draw from several therapeutic approaches depending on your child or teen's needs. My work considers the emotional, physical, cognitive, relational, and spiritual dimensions of experience. I have completed all required certification coursework in the Violet Oaklander Model and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), as well as Levels 1 & 2 of Brainspotting.



01 Violet Oaklander Play Therapy

The Violet Oaklander Model is a Gestalt-based approach that helps children and teens develop greater awareness of their feelings, needs, and experiences. Using expressive tools such as sandtray, dollhouse, art, clay, figurines, and projection activities, young people can explore their inner and outer worlds in ways that feel natural and accessible.

This work can support emotional expression, communication, self-awareness, and relationships. I use a client-led, non-coercive approach that respects autonomy while prioritizing safety, trust, and the therapeutic relationship.



02 Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

TF-CBT is an evidence-based approach for children and teens who have experienced trauma, loss, or overwhelming life events. It helps young people build coping and emotional regulation skills while gradually and safely making sense of difficult experiences.

Caregivers are an important part of this approach, helping strengthen communication, connection, and support beyond the therapy room. I incorporate TF-CBT in a developmentally attuned and relational way, adapting the work to the individual child or teen.



03 Brainspotting

Brainspotting is a trauma-informed, body-based approach often described by the phrase, "Where you look affects how you feel." Using specific points in a client's visual field, Brainspotting can help access emotions and body-based experiences that may be difficult to reach through conversation alone.

The process is gentle and does not require a client to extensively talk about what happened. With children, I may use playful focal points such as decorated popsicle sticks or stuffed animals to make the process developmentally appropriate and engaging.



Practice Policies

My goal is to provide thoughtful, high-quality care while maintaining healthy professional boundaries that allow me to be fully present for every client.

01 Communication

Email and text messages are welcome for:

- Scheduling
- Brief updates
- Appointment changes

Clinical questions, parenting concerns, treatment recommendations, and progress updates are best discussed during a scheduled appointment or parent consultation.

02 Response Time

I respond to non-urgent messages during regular business hours. Messages received evenings, weekends, or holidays will be returned as soon as possible during business hours.



If you are experiencing an emergency, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

03 Parent Partnership

Parents and caregivers are an important part of the therapy process. Parent consultations may be scheduled whenever additional support, collaboration, or treatment planning is needed.

04 Cancellations

Please provide at least 24 hours' notice if you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment. Cancellations with less than 24 hours' notice or missed appointments may be subject to the full session fee.

This policy helps honor the time reserved for your child and allows me to offer that time to another family.

05 After Sessions

I generally do not provide a detailed summary after each session. Children and teens benefit from knowing therapy is a safe and private space.

If there is important information regarding your child's safety or treatment, I will always communicate that with you.

06 Referrals

If your needs extend beyond the scope of your child's individual therapy, I am happy to provide referrals for parent coaching, family therapy, couples therapy, or other specialized services.



Medi-Cal Clients

Services Outside of Session

Medi-Cal has specific guidelines for services that may be provided and billed as part of your child's treatment.

TO ENSURE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS:

- Brief emails and texts are welcome for scheduling and important updates.
- Clinical concerns are best addressed during a scheduled therapy session or parent consultation.
- When clinically appropriate and covered by Medi-Cal, treatment may include collateral sessions, care coordination, treatment planning, or consultation with other professionals involved in your child's care.
- Services provided outside of sessions are documented and billed according to Medi-Cal and practice requirements.



You will not be charged separately for covered Medi-Cal clinical services.

If your family needs services that are not covered by Medi-Cal or fall outside the scope of your child's individual treatment, including family therapy when appropriate, I will discuss available options and referrals with you.



When I Must Share Information

There are a few situations where the law requires me to share information. These include situations in which I have a legal or ethical duty to help protect someone's safety.

- 01 Suspected child abuse or neglect
- 02 Abuse of an elder or dependent adult
- 03 Any concern that someone may seriously harm themselves
- 04 Any concern that someone may seriously harm another person
- 05 Court orders requiring disclosure
- 06 Other situations required by California law

Whenever possible, I will discuss the need to share information before doing so. If an emergency makes that impossible, I will act to help keep everyone safe.



Seeing Each Other Outside the Office

Protecting your privacy extends beyond the therapy office.

If we happen to see each other in public:

- I will not approach you.
- I will not say hello first.
- I will not acknowledge that I know you unless you choose to approach me.

This helps protect your confidentiality.

If you choose to say hello, I will gladly respond. If you introduce me to family or friends, you are welcome to introduce me simply by my first name or however feels comfortable to you. You are never expected to explain how you know me.



Technology & Note-Taking

During most sessions I use a secure electronic note-taking application.

The application:

- does not record audio,
- does not record video,
- does not create a recording of our conversation,
- is HIPAA compliant,
- is used only to assist with clinical documentation.

My goal is to remain fully present during sessions while keeping accurate records that support your care.



Emergencies

I do not provide 24-hour crisis services.



Call **911** if there is immediate danger.



Contact **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.



Go to your nearest emergency department.



Contact your local mobile crisis service if available.



About Me & Professional Boundaries



I'm **Christina Giffin**, an Associate Marriage and Family Therapist (AMFT).

I work with children, tweens, teens and families using a holistic, relationship-centered approach. I believe in the healing power of trust, creativity and connection.

REGISTERED AMFT

I am a registered Associate Marriage and Family Therapist with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS).

CLINICAL SUPERVISION

My work is supported by regular supervision with licensed clinicians. Supervision is confidential and focused on providing you with the best care.

Professional Boundaries

Clear boundaries help create a safe, respectful and effective therapeutic relationship.



SOCIAL MEDIA

I do not connect with clients or family members on social media. Our relationship stays within the therapy office.



PHOTOGRAPHY & RECORDING

For everyone's privacy, I do not take photos or record video or audio during sessions.



GIFTS

Gifts are never expected or required. If a gift is offered, we can talk about how it feels and what is appropriate.



COURT & LEGAL MATTERS

I am not a forensic evaluator and do not provide court reports, custody evaluations or legal testimony. If this is needed, I can help you find the right referral.

Boundaries are not about keeping people out. They are about creating the right conditions for connection, growth and healing.



Your Privacy Matters

For Teens & Mature Tweens

Therapy works best when you can be honest.

My office is a place where you can talk about things that feel difficult, confusing, embarrassing, stressful—or just hard to say out loud.

*You don't have to be perfect here.
You don't have to impress me.
You don't have to know the right words.
My job is to help—not judge.*

YOU CAN TALK TO ME ABOUT...

- Anxiety
- Depression
- School stress
- Friendships
- Family problems
- Bullying
- Social media
- Dating
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Crushes
- Pornography
- Vaping
- Drugs & alcohol
- Mistakes
- Fears
- Embarrassing situations

Talking about something does not automatically mean I have to tell your parents.



WHEN I HAVE TO GET HELP

There are some situations when I cannot keep what you tell me private. If I have reason to suspect that you are being abused or neglected, including sexual abuse or exploitation, I am required by law to make a report. I also need to take action if I believe you or someone else is in serious danger.

Whenever possible, I will talk with you about what I need to do and what will happen next before I involve someone else.

Understanding Privacy & Safety

Not everything involving sex, relationships, substances, or difficult feelings is automatically reportable. What I am required to do depends on the circumstances, including your age, another person's age, consent, coercion, exploitation, abuse, and safety. California law requires me to consider the specific situation.

IF YOU TELL ME...	DOES THIS AUTOMATICALLY MEAN I HAVE TO TELL OR REPORT?
You have a crush	No, not automatically. You can talk about crushes or feelings for someone.
You're dating someone	No, not by itself. Dating someone, especially close to your own age, doesn't automatically mean I have to tell.
You have questions about sex, puberty, or birth control	No. It's normal to have questions, and you can ask them here.
You viewed pornography	Not necessarily. Viewing pornography by itself does not automatically mean I have to tell.
You tell me about sexual activity	It depends on the circumstances. It can depend on ages, consent, pressure, coercion, or other factors.
Someone asks for or shares sexual images involving you	It depends on what happened. It may depend on your age, the other person's age, consent, and whether anyone was pressured or harmed.
You are being pressured, forced, exploited, or abused sexually	I am required to report suspected abuse. I will take steps to help keep you safe.
An adult has sexual contact with a minor	I am required to report suspected abuse. I will take steps to help keep you safe.

If you're ever unsure whether something will stay private, ask me.

I will answer honestly and explain my responsibilities.

Scheduled Time Off

Office Availability

I value consistency in our work together and do my best to provide reliable, ongoing support. To help your family plan ahead, below are my currently scheduled dates away from the office.

2026

OCT | 05 – 09

NOV | 23 – 27

DEC | 21 – 25

2027

FEB | 15 – 26

ADDITIONAL TIME OFF

Occasionally, I may need additional time away due to illness or to care for an immediate family member. When possible, I will provide as much advance notice as I can.

A FEW REMINDERS

- Regular appointments outside of these dates will be held as scheduled.
- If an unexpected absence occurs, I will contact you as soon as possible.
- Please feel free to reach out if you have questions about scheduling.

Thank you for your understanding and flexibility.



I'm glad you're here.

Thank you for trusting me with your child
and allowing me to be part of your family's care.

CHRISTINA GIFFIN, AMFT
ASSOCIATE MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST