

Healthy Healthcare Design

Guidelines for designing mental health waiting room spaces in
a post-pandemic world

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The Problem

Distancing efforts that slow the spread of disease put increased psychological strain on both students and faculty alike (Qiu et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020).

It is more important than ever to make people who are new to mental health counseling feel like they are entering a **deinstitutionalized, homelike environment** where they have **autonomy** and **privacy**, while also feeling **connected** and **less alone** (Ulrich et al., 2018, Carr, 2017, Devlin, 1992).

Our Belief: Pandemic-resilient design practices are not at odds with good design and that they can be strategically employed to create a comfortable, welcoming, and dignified environment.

Evidence-based disease prevention measures

Disease prevention measure	Positive impact on visitor experience
Physical glass partitions to prevent microbial transmission between workers and visitors at the welcome desk (Gan et al., 2020)	Increased sense of confidentiality (Watson et al., 2006, Carr, 2017)
Fixed furniture at a safe 6' distance, moveable tables and stools for visitors in the same 'bubble'	Allows visitors the autonomy to opt-in or out of socialization, a sense of control (Ulrich, 1991)
Wall-mounted air cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate arresting (HEPA) filter close to the ceiling near the reception desk (Anderson et al., 2007).	Sound masking conversation between receptionist and patient—promotes sense of privacy and reduces stress (Iyendo, 2016)
Large openable windows allowing for improved air circulation	Abundant natural light, fresh air, and views of the outdoors (Brown et al., 2013)
Vinyl upholstery with antimicrobial additives (Tierney, 2020)	Ease of cleaning, minimizes the need to use cleaners that produce noxious fumes

Evidence-based design strategies to promote relaxation

- Warm, natural color scheme that incorporates familiar patterns such as wood-grain finishes (Shepley et al., 2013).
- Positive distractions, such as plants, views of the outdoors, and reading materials (Ulrich, 1991).
- Cozy elements like comfortable chairs and soft pillows (Duque et al., 2019).
- Artwork depicting recognizable natural scenes (Brown et al., 2013, Ulrich).
- Copious natural light (Shepley et al.).
- Warm interior lighting (Spear, 2018).
- Intuitive space layout and wayfinding (Brown et al., 1997).

Design Precedents



Natural light
Indoor plants



Wood grain finishing

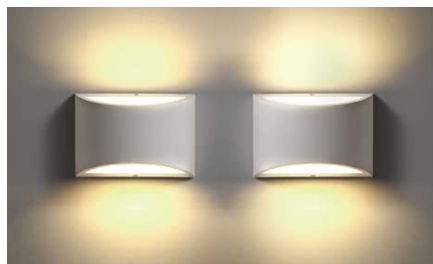


Terrazzo flooring



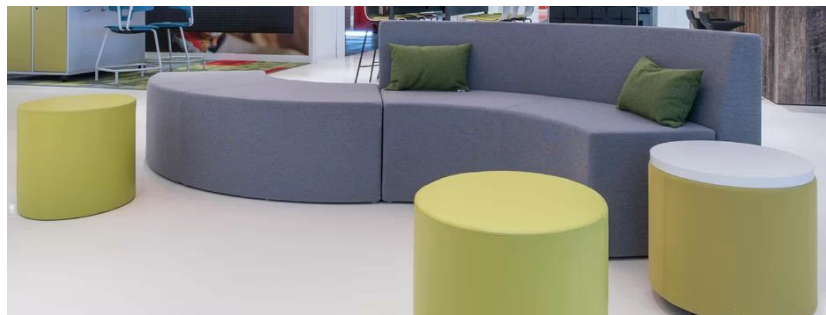
Diffuse overhead lighting

Warm wall lights

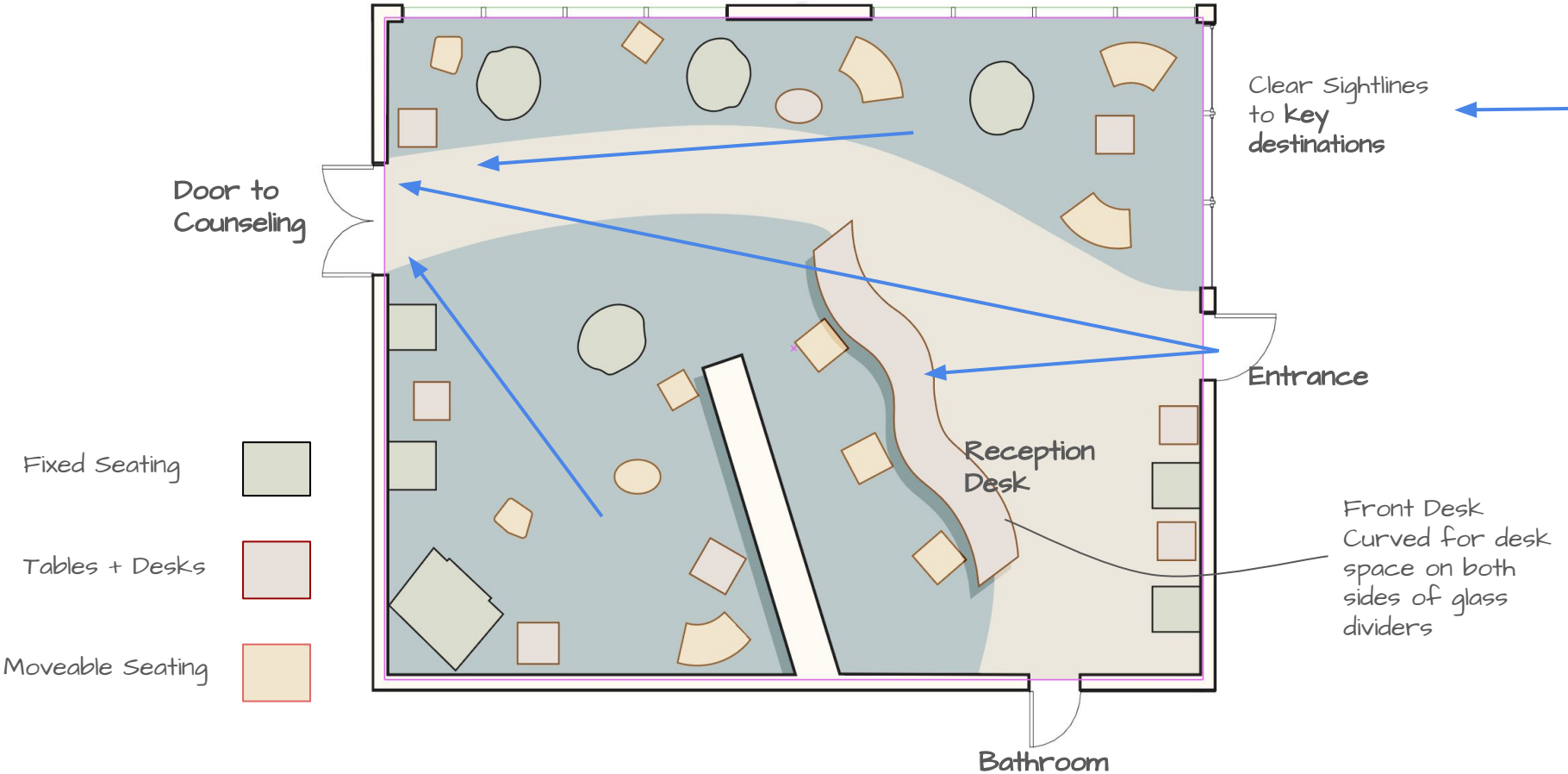


Nature artwork

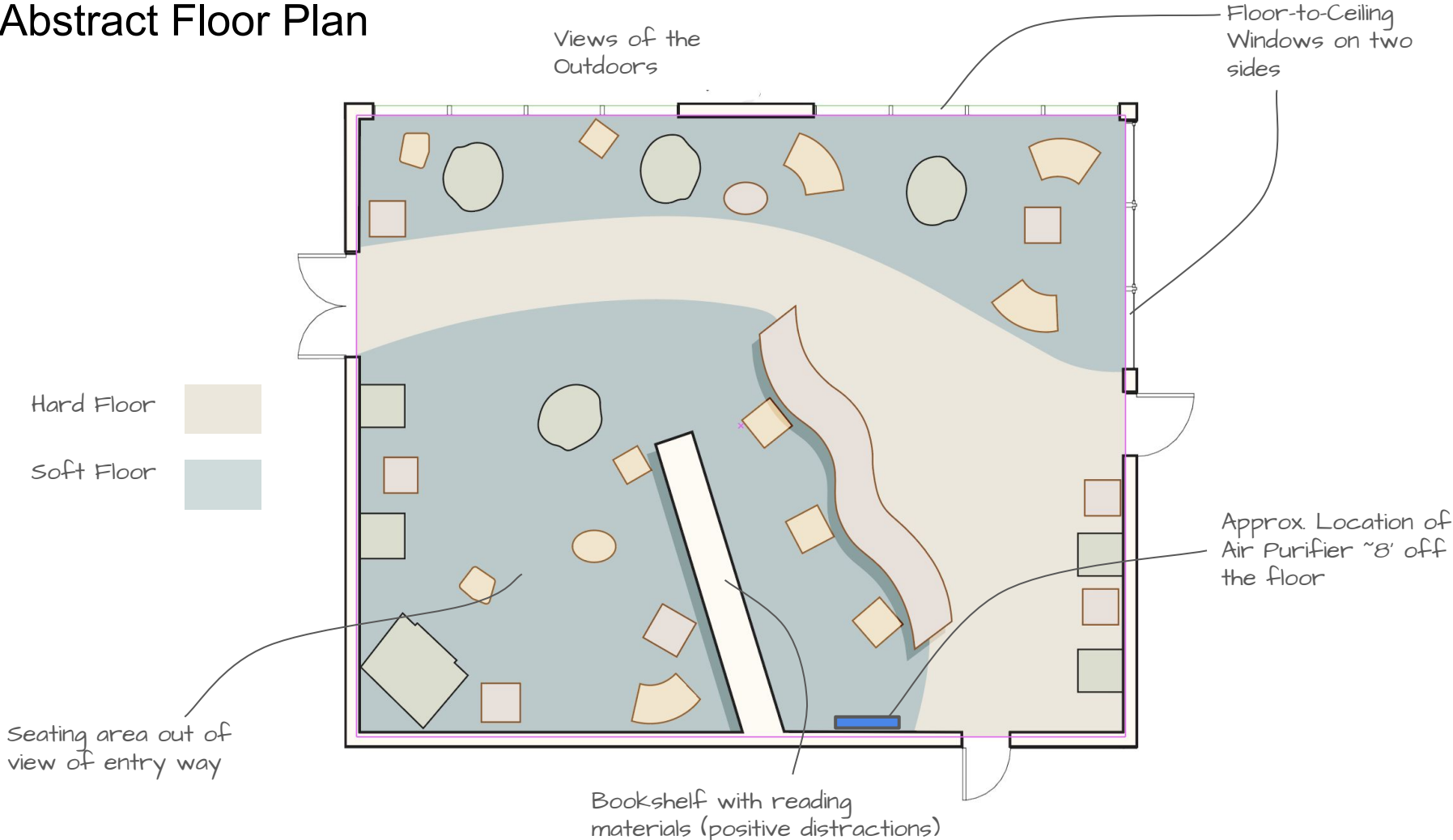
Adjustable, comfortable furniture



Abstract Floor Plan



Abstract Floor Plan



Views of the Outdoors

Floor-to-Ceiling Windows on two sides

Hard Floor
Soft Floor

Approx. Location of Air Purifier ~8' off the floor

Seating area out of view of entry way

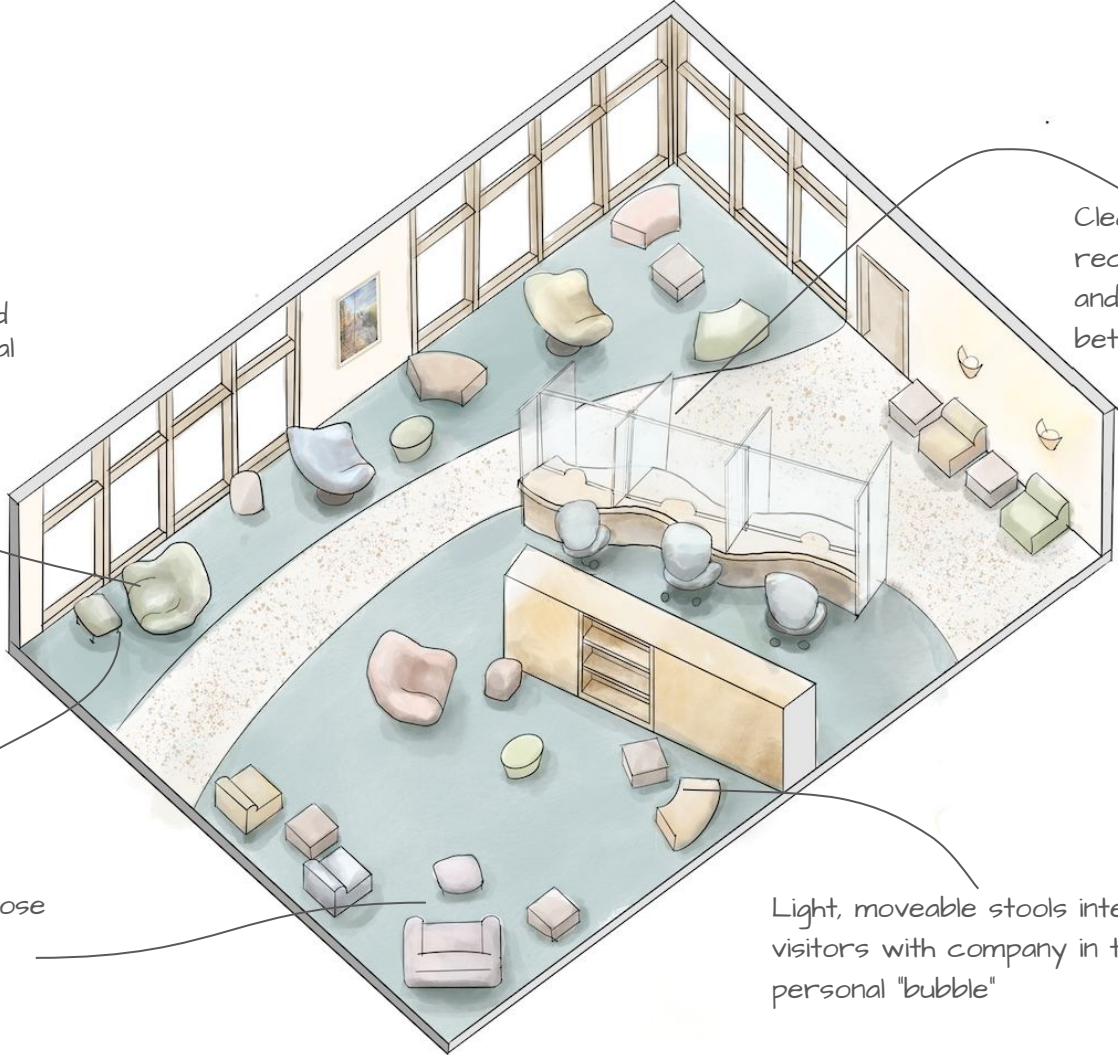
Bookshelf with reading materials (positive distractions)

Fixed, swivelable furniture allowing visitors to choose the direction they face and regulate their level of social interaction

Clear glass dividers between receptionists receptionists and visitors, glazed glass between visitors

Different seating areas allow for visitor to choose desired level of privacy

Light, moveable stools intended for visitors with company in their personal "bubble"



Approx Location of HEPA Air Purifier
~8' off the floor

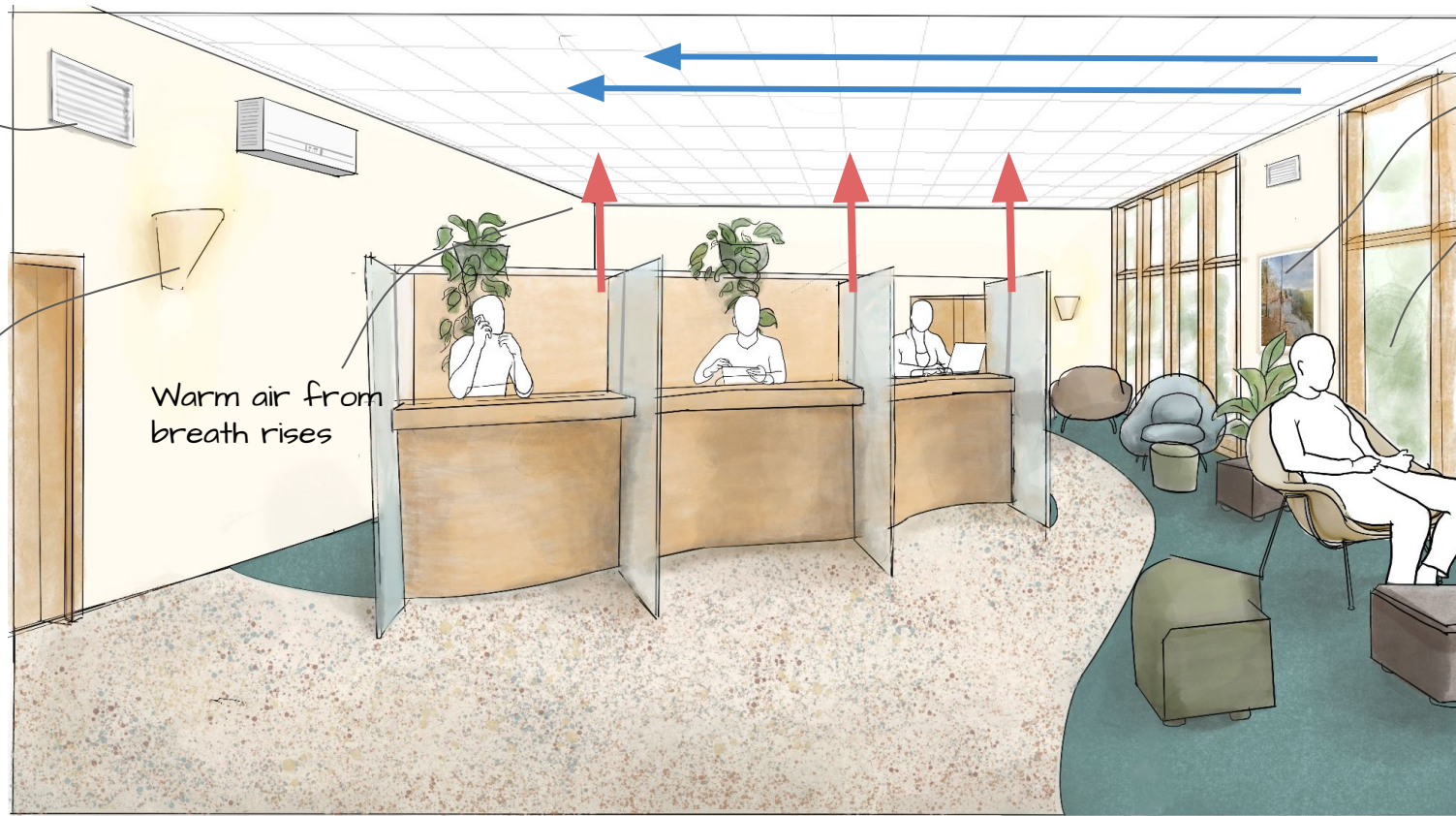
Air from window and vents diffuses
potentially contaminated air

Intake and
exhaust
vents

Nature art,
plants, and
views of
outside

Warm,
Diffuse
Lighting

Warm air from
breath rises



View Upon Entrance

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