

**COUNSELING CENTER  
CLINICIAN-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT**

Welcome to the Counseling Center. This agreement contains important information about our professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and client rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) used for the purpose of treatment and health care operations. HIPAA requires that the Counseling Center share with you a Notice of Privacy Practices for use and disclosure of PHI for treatment and health care operations. The Notice, which you have been offered along with this Agreement, explains HIPAA and its application to your personal health information in greater detail. The law requires that we obtain your signature acknowledging that the Counseling Center has provided you with this information. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is important that you read them carefully. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures. When you sign that you have received this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. You may revoke this Agreement in writing at any time. That revocation will be binding on the Counseling Center unless we have taken action in reliance on this agreement.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Your appointment will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, your clinician will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your work may include and recommendations for getting help. One of the recommendations may be psychotherapy. If so, the Counseling Center may or may not be able to provide you with psychotherapy, depending on your overall needs. If psychotherapy or any other recommendations suggested by your clinician include services that the Counseling Center cannot provide, you will be given suggestions of where you might receive those services. Wherever you choose to obtain treatment, you should evaluate the information received from the clinician who met with you along with your own opinions of what sort of treatment you are willing to do and whether you feel comfortable working with the treating clinician. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, energy, and often money, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select.

If you have questions about the procedures used or conclusions made by your clinician, please discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your clinician will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the particular problems you are experiencing, the therapeutic methods used by your clinician, and the personalities of the clinician and client. There are many different methods clinicians may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for an active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things that are discussed both during your sessions and on your own.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience a variety of uncomfortable feelings. The changes you make in therapy may also affect your relationships in unexpected ways. Also, certain psychological conditions, such as suicidal states, may result in death regardless of the interventions of the clinician. Psychotherapy has also been shown to have many

benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, reductions in distress, and improved mood, functioning, and overall quality of life. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

The clinician with whom you meet may be supervised by a senior clinician. If that is the case, you will be informed about this by your clinician.

For professional development, your clinician may request your permission to audio or video-record your session(s). No recording will be done without your prior knowledge and consent. Only the supervisors or consultants directly involved in consulting on your case will have access to those recordings. The recordings will be erased upon completion of the supervision or consultation.

## **MEETINGS**

We normally conduct an evaluation that will last from one to two sessions. During this time, you and your clinician can both decide if she/he is the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, your clinician will usually schedule one 45-50 minute appointment (one session of 45 or 50 minutes duration) per week at a time that is agreed on. Once an appointment is scheduled, you will be expected to attend unless you provide advance notice of cancellation. If you need to cancel an appointment, it is your responsibility to contact the Counseling Center to reschedule.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES, BILLING, AND PAYMENTS**

At this time, all services provided by the Counseling Center are free. This is subject to change. If the Counseling Center needs to start charging fees, you will be given as much advance notice as possible.

## **CONTACTING US**

The Counseling Center is open from 8 AM to 12 PM and 12:45 PM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters. During summer semester, the Counseling Center is open from 7:30 AM to 12 PM and 12:45 PM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Thursday. Please contact the Counseling Center by phone or by stopping by the office. Email is not ordinarily used by the Counseling Center for two-way communication with clients or to schedule or change appointments. Due to our work schedules, Counseling Center clinicians are usually not immediately available by telephone. The Counseling Center telephone is usually answered by a receptionist who knows how to reach us. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it. If you are difficult to reach, please inform the receptionist of some times when you will be available. Please note that when our office is closed, only an outgoing announcement is obtained by calling the Counseling Center and there is no option for leaving a message. The Counseling Center is not equipped to receive text messages.

At times when the Counseling Center is closed, requests for emergency treatment should be directed to Pathways Community Behavioral Healthcare (888-279-8188) or go to the emergency department at Western Missouri Medical Center at 403 Burkarth Road in Warrensburg (660-747-2500). In a life threatening emergency call 911.

## **CONTACTING YOU**

The Counseling Center will make every effort to contact you through your preferred mode. An exception would be an emergency situation, in which case we will try to reach you any way we can.

As a courtesy, you may receive communications about your appointments. Whatever way the Counseling Center may try to contact you, the security of any communication medium for ensuring privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and there are specific risks unique to each mode of communication.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING**

The Counseling Center staff does not accept or respond to “Friend” requests, nor do we respond to other contact on social media venues (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).

## **LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and a clinician. In most situations, the Counseling Center can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent which is provided by signing that you received this document. Your signature acknowledging that you received this Agreement provides consent for the following activities:

- Although you will probably meet with only one clinician, you are receiving services from the Counseling Center. Consequently, you will have a file in our office to which all staff will have necessary access. The clinicians on staff consult with each other about our work. Our staff includes the receptionist. In most cases, we need to share protected information within the Counseling Center for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as scheduling, records management, and quality assurance. All of the mental health professionals are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. The receptionist has been given training about protecting your privacy and has agreed not to release any information outside of the Counseling Center without the permission of a professional staff member.
- Permission for the Counseling Center staff to communicate with the University of Central Missouri’s University Health Center staff regarding your condition
- In providing, coordinating, or managing your treatment and other services related to your psychological care, the Counseling Center sometimes interacts with various other professionals, on or off campus, concerning your well-being, such as other health care providers or relevant University officials, for example the Office of Accessibility Services.
- Records are stored electronically in a secure server maintained by the University of Central Missouri Office of Technology. In conducting routine maintenance activities, the Office of Technology does not ordinarily view individually identifiable information. In a circumstance in which they would view individually identifiable data, Information Services personnel are bound by the same confidentiality rules as the Counseling Center.
- The Counseling Center may also use some psychological test-scoring services. As required by HIPAA, the Counseling Center has formal business associate contracts with these businesses, in which they promise to maintain the confidentiality of this data except as specifically allowed in the contract or otherwise required by law. If you wish, the Counseling Center can provide you with the names of these organizations and/or a blank copy of this contract.

There are some situations where the Counseling Center is permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or Authorization:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your diagnosis and treatment, such information is protected by the clinician-patient privilege law. The Counseling Center cannot provide any information without a) your (or your legal representative's) written authorization, or b) a court order. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order the Counseling Center to disclose information.
- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, the Counseling Center may be required to provide it for them.
- If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against the Counseling Center, we may disclose relevant information regarding that client in order to defend ourselves.
- If a client files a worker's compensation claim, the Counseling Center must, upon appropriate request, provide a copy of the client's record to the Labor and Industrial Commission or the Workers' Compensation Division of the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, or the client's employer.

There are some situations in which the counseling Center is obligated to take actions, either by law or by our professional judgment, which we believe are necessary to attempt to protect you, others, or the University community from harm, and we may have to reveal some information about your condition or your treatment.

- If we have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the law requires that the Counseling Center file a report with the Missouri Division of Family Services. Once such a report is filed, we may be required to provide additional information.
- If we have reasonable cause to suspect that an elderly, disabled, or vulnerable adult presents a likelihood of suffering serious physical harm and is in need of protective services, the law requires that the Counseling Center file a report with Department of Social Services. Once such a report is filed, we may be required to provide additional information.
- If we believe that it is necessary to disclose information to protect against a risk of serious harm being inflicted by you upon yourself, another person, or to the University community, CC may be required to take protective action. Depending on the situation, these actions may include initiating hospitalization and/or contacting significant others (for example, relatives) and/or a potential victim and/or law enforcement and/or other University officials.

If such a situation arises, your clinician will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and we will limit our disclosure to what is necessary.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex, and we are not attorneys. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

Your Clinical Record is maintained electronically. The electronic records are stored on a secure dedicated server maintained by the University's Information Services department. Access to the contents of your file is limited to the Counseling Center clinical staff.

The laws and standards of our profession require that the Counseling Center keep Protected Health Information (PHI) about you in your Clinical Record. It includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which your problem impacts on your life, your diagnosis, any information about substance use and diagnostic impressions of Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders, the goals that we set for treatment, your progress towards those goals, your medical and social history including any HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) related information, your treatment history, any past treatment records that we receive from other providers, reports of any professional consultations, and any reports that have been sent to anyone. Your record may include information from others who contact the Counseling Center expressing concern about you. For example, your record may include contacts we receive from faculty, staff, Public Safety, or other students. In certain situations, we may access additional information such as reports about students of concern or disciplinary reports.

You may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing, except in the unusual circumstance where disclosure is reasonably likely to endanger you and/or others or when another individual (other than another health care provider) is referenced and we believe disclosing that information puts the other person at risk of substantial harm. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted by and/or be upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, CC recommends that you initially review them in your clinician's presence, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. In most circumstances, CC is allowed to charge a fee of 40 cents per page (and for certain other expenses). The exceptions to this policy are also contained in the Privacy Notice Form you were offered.

## **SERVICES MEANT TO ESTABLISH FACT**

The Counseling Center does not provide either disability determinations or evaluations for the purpose of recommending that a student receive certain exceptions or be relieved of various obligations. If a letter is requested from the Counseling Center in an effort to accomplish any of these goals, the letter often will verify only how many appointments the student attended and include no other information.

## **COURT RELATED SERVICES**

The Counseling Center does not provide court ordered treatment or evaluations, testify in court, or write reports for court or legal use. If you are seeking psychological services because of a court case in which you are involved, you most likely will be referred to other providers. If the Counseling Center is compelled to be involved in court proceedings in any way (testimony, writing a report, sending copies of records, communications with attorneys, etc.) you will be charged for all time spent on such activity at the rate of \$400 an hour.

## **CLIENT RIGHTS**

HIPAA provides you with several rights with regard to your Clinical Records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that your clinician amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Records is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about the Counseling Center policies and procedures recorded in your records; and the right to a paper copy of the Counseling Center privacy policies and procedures. You have the right to a paper copy of this Services Agreement and have been given one. You also have the right to keep a paper copy of the Privacy Notice which has been offered to you. Your clinician is happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

## **COUNSELING CENTER ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENTS**

The Counseling Center receives unsolicited information about students from a number of University officials. This information may include, but is not limited to, student conduct reports through Maxient, Public Safety Incident Reports, and verbal and/or written communications from other University faculty and staff.

Counseling Center staff also may access information on our own initiative with the goal of maximizing our effectiveness in helping students. The information the Counseling Center may access includes, but is not limited to, general student enrollment and demographic information, student conduct records and incident reports, and academic performance information.

## **STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 AND THEIR PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS**

Students under 18 years of age and their parents or legal guardians need to be aware of the limitations regarding both consent to treatment and extent of confidentiality that applies to minors. Additional information about these policies will be reviewed with the student during the interview, and discussed further with the student and/or parent/guardian as needed.

## **COUPLES OR JOINT COUNSELING**

Couples or joint counseling has unique aspects of confidentiality that your clinician will discuss with you in the initial assessment. For example, ordinarily you and your partner together are considered as one client. Also, even though authorization is required from both of you to release information about your couples counseling, it is possible that either you or your partner could compel the Counseling Center to disclose information over the objection of the other partner.

**YOUR SIGNATURE IN OUR OFFICE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS AGREEMENT AND AGREE TO ITS TERMS AND ALSO SERVES AS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THE HIPAA PRIVACY NOTICE DESCRIBED ABOVE WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO YOU.**