

# INFORMED CONSENT

Welcome to Counseling Services! Please read this important information about our services and policies carefully. You will have the opportunity to discuss the content of this document with your counselor before you sign it

## SERVICES

Counseling Services offers assistance to individual students for concerns that are either psychological (e.g., anxiety, depression, relationship concerns), academic (e.g., study skills, time management), or career-related (e.g., career assessment). We also offer couples counseling when at least one member of the couple is a Trinity student.

Counseling offers a variety of potential benefits. For example, counseling can lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems like time management and career confusion, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. Counseling also carries potential risks, most notably the experience of uncomfortable emotions that may accompany a discussion of unpleasant aspects of your life (e.g., family history, academic difficulties, or career indecision).

Some clients find that one session offers sufficient help for their concern. If your situation requires multiple sessions, however, the first session will include an evaluation of your needs and a discussion of what the counseling process might involve. You should evaluate this information and assess whether you feel comfortable working with the counselor. If you question whether you and your counselor “fit” well together, please let your counselor know. S/he will be happy to discuss your concerns and, if you wish, help you set up a meeting with another counselor either at Counseling Services or off campus.

Your counselor may use a variety of methods to help you address your concerns. For example, s/he might ask you to complete a questionnaire, or brainstorm options to consider, or educate yourself using on-line or print resources. The counseling process depends on the personalities of the counselor and client as well as the client’s particular needs. It also requires effort on your part. If you participate in multiple sessions, your counselor may assign “homework” in order to help you reach your goals. Indeed, for counseling to be beneficial, you must work on things you and your counselor discuss both during and between sessions.

## SESSIONS

Clients who see a counselor for more than one session typically schedule one 50-minute session either weekly or every other week; 90% of clients see a counselor for fewer than six sessions. Although your first session may have been during walk-in hours, we ask that you make an appointment for each subsequent session. We ask that you provide 24 hours advance notice if you wish to cancel or reschedule an appointment. If you no-show, cancel, or reschedule with less than 2 hours notice three times during a semester, we will need to refer you to an off-campus counselor so that we can ensure adequate space in our counselors’ schedules for other students who are seeking our services. Finally, if you no-show and later contact us to reschedule, it may be up to a week before your counselor can fit you into his or her schedule.

## OFF-CAMPUS REFERRALS

When we make off-campus referrals, they are typically for one of two reasons. First, if we determine that a student’s concern requires specialized assistance beyond that which we can offer, we refer the student to an appropriate off-campus mental health provider. Second, some clients can benefit from a consultation with an off-campus psychiatrist as a supplement to on-campus counseling. In the event of an off-campus referral, you or your family would be financially responsible for off-campus counseling or psychiatric services.

## CLIENTS UNDER AGE 18

If you are under age 18, the law gives your parents the right to ascertain whether you are receiving counseling and examine your counseling records. This rarely happens, however, and we will make our best effort to talk with you before discussing the nature of your counseling with your parents.

Continued on reverse.

## CONTACTING US

### *By Phone*

Our secretary will help you make or change appointments. If you need to speak to your counselor and s/he is not available, the secretary will direct you to your counselor's voice mail or will take a message. If you experience a psychological emergency after hours, please call 911 if the emergency is life-threatening. Otherwise, please contact a member of the Residential Life staff, Health Services (999-8111) or Campus Security (999-7000), any of whom can contact the on-call counselor on your behalf. If your counselor plans to be unavailable for an extended time, s/he will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

### *By E-mail*

E-mail is never fully confidential, so it is our policy to limit its use for communication with our clients. Please refrain from using e-mail to communicate with us about personal matters or to schedule appointments.

## COUNSELING FILES

Texas state law and professional ethics require that we keep confidential counseling files for 15 years. Counseling files are NOT part of your academic records and are always kept under lock and key in the Counseling Services office. Only the Counseling Services professional staff has access to them, except in the most unusual circumstances (see CONFIDENTIALITY below). You may ask your counselor about the content of your counseling file because you have the legal right to know what is in your file.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Your interactions with Counseling Services, including your appointment history, the content of your sessions, your progress in counseling, and your counseling file are confidential and can be disclosed only with your written permission. In order to provide you with high quality assistance, your counselor may consult other members of our professional staff. The consultant is also legally bound to keep your personal information confidential.

In the future, you may be asked whether you have ever received counseling. For example, employers who require a security clearance (e.g., the FBI) or who send employees to parts of the world where psychological services do not exist (e.g., the Peace Corps) may ask applicants whether they have ever received counseling. If you say yes, the employer may ask you to give consent for us to provide information to an investigator who works for the employer.

Although the law vigorously protects your confidentiality, it also requires or permits some exceptions, including the following:

- If we believe that you are threatening imminent physical injury to yourself or another person, we may take action to protect you or the other person.
- If you tell us about an abusive situation, known or suspected, past or present, involving a child, elderly person, or disabled person, we must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

These exceptions to confidentiality are extremely rare. If one should occur, and whenever possible, we will discuss with you any action under consideration. We are not legally obligated to do so, however, especially if such a discussion would prevent us from securing your safety or the safety of others.

Please discuss with your counselor any questions or concerns you have about confidentiality and its limits. S/he will be happy to discuss these issues with you.

**PLEASE DO NOT SIGN BELOW UNTIL YOU HAVE DISCUSSED THIS FORM WITH YOUR COUNSELOR.**

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I have read the above material and understand its provisions. I understand that the results of counseling vary from person to person and that achieving a positive outcome depends upon my effort as well as that of my counselor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date