

Informed Consent for Professional Services

Welcome to the Counseling & Wellness Center and thank you for trusting us to assist you with your personal concerns. We would like to detail some of our policies, including our privacy practices, and services that are necessary to effectively assist all students. We ask that you read this material and ask your therapist about any portions that may be unclear to you.

Our Mission

The staff at the Counseling and Wellness Center believes that the development of the whole person is critical to the academic mission of the campus. Intellectual development is not separable from the personal, social, physical and spiritual. We provide comprehensive services to aid in this development. A Wellness philosophy is the foundation for all services and programs. Our belief is that wellness helps students be more responsible for their lives and to understand the factors that affect their well-being. Students are more resilient to meeting demands and challenges when they make informed and reflective decisions.

Eligibility for Services

Counseling and Wellness Center services are available to all currently enrolled New College of Florida and the University of South Florida-Sarasota/Manatee undergraduate and graduate students who provide proof of eligibility and have paid the appropriate fees.

Professional Services Provided

The Counseling & Wellness Center offers a variety of professional services: individual, couples, and group counseling, crisis intervention, and psychoeducational information. Students are initially seen by a staff therapist; you and the therapist will determine which of these professional services best fit your needs. Generally, we provide brief treatment (12 sessions or less) and may refer you to community services if deemed most appropriate to your situation.

Counseling is a confidential process designed to help you address your concerns, come to a greater understanding of yourself, and learn effective personal and interpersonal coping strategies. It involves a relationship between you and a professional therapist who has the desire and willingness to help you accomplish your individual goals. Counseling involves sharing sensitive, personal, and private information that may at times be distressing. During the course of counseling, there may be periods of increased anxiety or confusion. The outcome of counseling is often positive; however, the level of satisfaction for any individual is not predictable.

In your first session your therapist will orient you to what therapy will entail and how he/she will assist you. You should evaluate this information and whether you feel comfortable working with your therapist. You have the right to discuss the rationale for any aspect of your treatment or to decline any part of treatment. You also have the right to request another therapist, only after discussing your concerns with your current therapist to explore why things may not be working out. However, you are under no obligation to do so.

Policies Regarding Appointments

To schedule an appointment please call or stop in during regular working hours, 8am - 12noon and 1pm to 5pm. You may leave a message on our voice mail after business hours. We will get back with you at the earliest opportunity. Individual and couples therapy appointments are generally for 45-50 minutes and are typically scheduled once per week. That appointment time is a standing time each week and will be reserved for you until you no longer want it or you have terminated treatment. If you are **20 minutes** late for an appointment, you will not be seen that day, but are welcome to reschedule. If you cannot make a scheduled appointment, it is your responsibility to call (941) 487-4254 to cancel. If you forget an appointment, call as soon as possible to reschedule. If you miss your appointment and do not call to reschedule, your standing appointment time **will not** be held for you, and there is no guarantee your therapist will have another available appointment. If this occurs, you may choose to be placed on the waitlist and reassigned; you may use our emergency counseling services in the meantime.

Please note that you will be discharged from treatment if you fail to contact the Center within **30 days** of the last contact. We will assume services are no longer desired and the professional relationship will be terminated.

When appropriate, referral to our consulting psychiatrist is made through one of the staff therapists. Services provided by the psychiatrist include medication evaluation and management, diagnosis, and treatment planning. In order to be seen by the psychiatrist, you must be enrolled in continuous individual psychotherapy. After an appointment is made with the psychiatrist, if you do not show for **two** appointments, you are no longer eligible for further psychiatric services. We will be happy to refer you elsewhere if you would like to do so.

Emergency Services

In some instances, you might need immediate assistance at a time when your therapist is not at the Counseling and Wellness Center or cannot return your call. These emergencies may involve suicidal or homicidal crisis, sexual assault or rape, domestic violence, deaths, serious accidents, or thoughts of committing dangerous acts. If you find yourself requiring emergency services between 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, please contact the Center. At other times, please contact a resident assistant (RA), resident director (RD), or the campus police at (941) 487-4210. If for whatever reason that option is not available to you, visit the nearest Emergency Room and ask for the mental health professional on call. Our emergency service is not a “crisis hotline.” Students who are emotionally distressed and simply need to talk to someone should come to the Center during regular office hours.

Below are some additional telephone numbers which are answered on a 24-hour basis and may be helpful to you in case of an emergency:

- Campus Victim Advocate Program (941) 252-5156
- Safe Place and Rape and Crisis Center (SPARCC) (941) 365-1976
- Bayside Center for Behavioral Health (941) 917-7760

Policies on Unsafe Behavior and Denial of Services

We do not intervene with students who are intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Individuals who are under the influence may need medical attention or to be kept safe in a hospital or other secure environment. Therefore, a psychological intervention would serve little purpose. Further, if you are experiencing symptoms of a compromised immune system, such as the flu or a cold, please call and allow us to reschedule your appointment.

The Counseling and Wellness Center reserves the right to deny services to individuals whose concerns are beyond the capacity of this office to effectively treat as well as to any individual that abuses or misuses services in any manner (e.g., non-compliance with treatment, frequent missed appointments, etc). If this should become necessary, other local treatment options and possible referrals would be discussed.

Policies Regarding Referrals

In accordance with our mission, if we determine that your treatment needs require resources or competencies beyond what we can provide, (e.g., medically, level of severity, pharmacologically, legally, etc) we will assist with a referral to an appropriate mental health provider. Students presenting such conditions will be referred to appropriate resources in the community at the discretion of the Director of the Center. Students are responsible for paying the costs incurred for services and treatment provided through outside agencies.

Limits of Confidentiality

Information shared by you in assessment and counseling sessions will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and in most instances will not be disclosed to anyone without your written permission. A copy of our release of information form is available from the Center staff. There are situations that require written, advanced consent, such as the following:

- Your therapist may be a pre-doctoral, pre-masters mental health professional, or a psychologist not yet licensed in Florida. All therapists in training will inform you of the name of their supervisor. Licensed psychologists provide supervision, which may include discussion of your treatment and clinical record.
- Because of our training mission and quality assurance, your therapist may ask to audio or video record sessions for confidential supervisory purposes. Audiotapes and videotapes are kept in a locked cabinet and erased at the end of your treatment. In these situations, further explanation about recording will be provided and you will be asked to give written consent before any recording occurs.
- Your therapist may occasionally seek consultation with other Counseling and Wellness Center staff members about a case. In addition, administrative staff will need access to protected information for such purposes as scheduling and

quality assurance. All staff members have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside the Counseling and Wellness Center without the permission of a professional staff member.

There are some situations where we are permitted or required to disclose information either with or without your consent:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your treatment, we cannot provide such information without your written authorization, or 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 your therapist to disclose information.
- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities or national security.
- If a client files a complaint or a lawsuit against a therapist, we may disclose relevant information regarding the client in order to defend the therapist.
- If your therapist has reason to believe that a child or a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused, the law requires that the situation be reported to the appropriate state agency.
- If the therapist believes you present clear and substantial danger of harm to yourself or others, the therapist will take protective actions. These may include contacting family members, seeking hospitalization for you, notifying any potential victim(s), and notifying law enforcement.

This summary is designed to provide an overview of confidentiality and its limits, therefore, it is important that you read our **Notice of Privacy Practices** for more detailed explanations, and discuss with your therapist any questions or concerns.

Lastly, please note that email is not a secure form of communication and is not recommended as a primary method of contacting your therapist for any treatment related concerns. Unless your therapist and you agree otherwise, please call to leave a message and talk with the Center staff if you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment. Note that any communication you have with a therapist outside of a regular appointment session may be documented in your record at the Center.

Minors

If you are under 18 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents or legal guardian the right to examine your treatment records. Before giving parents or legal guardians any information we will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections you may have with what we are prepared to discuss.

Professional Records

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep Protected Health Information about you in your clinical record. Your clinical record includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the way in which your concerns affects your life, your diagnosis, the goals for treatment, your progress toward those goals, your medical and social history, your treatment history, results of clinical assessments (including raw data), any past treatment records, and copies of any reports that have been received or sent to anyone. Personal information that you share with your therapist may be entered into your clinical record in written form. However, efforts are generally made to avoid entry of information that may be especially sensitive or embarrassing. Your clinical records are not part of academic records and clinical records are maintained for seven years.

Research and Quality Assurance

After your treatment has been completed, you may receive a brief questionnaire from the Center. Information for an annual report of services is routinely compiled and reported as group averages with no individually identifying information. This is used for program planning, service evaluation, and to assess service needs.

Although it is not possible to guarantee outcomes, The Counseling and Wellness Center is committed to providing quality services. If you ever have any concerns about your experience, we encourage you to speak with your therapist about this. If the difficulty cannot be resolved by working with your therapist, you may address your concerns to the Director of the Counseling and Wellness Center, Anne E. Fisher, Ph.D. Copies of ethics codes, relevant laws, and administrative rules of the professional licensing boards are available upon request.

In Conclusion

If you have any questions after reading this information, be sure to discuss them with your therapist. Your signature on the accompanying Acknowledgement of Informed Consent for Professional Services form indicates you have read the

information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice describes how medical and mental health-related information about you may be used and disclosed and, if applicable, how drug and alcohol-related information about you may be used and disclosed. It also describes how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Introduction

At the Counseling and Wellness Center, we are dedicated to using and disclosing your protected health information in a responsible way. This notice applies to the medical, mental health, and, if applicable, drug and alcohol-related records that are generated by the Counseling and Wellness Center. The term “protected health information” refers to information you share with us or which arises while we are serving you. Examples may include results of assessments and summaries of your progress in treatment.

This Notice of Privacy Practices explains how we may use and disclose your protected health information and our legal duties to protect the privacy of health records that we create or receive. It also explains your rights as they relate to your protected health information. This notice is effective June 26, 2006, and applies to all protected health information as defined by state and federal regulations.

The Type of Uses and Disclosures We May Make

Generally, your protected health information will be disclosed only if you sign a written authorization. Under certain circumstances, however, we may use and disclose your protected health information without your knowledge and as a part of our regular operations.

- **Treatment:** Information obtained by Counseling and Wellness Center staff involved in your health care will be recorded in your clinical record and used to determine the course of treatment. Information gathered may be used for creating an assessment, developing a treatment plan, recording your progress in treatment, and assisting in writing your after-care plan.
- **Regular healthcare operations:** We may use your health information for such quality improvement purposes as reviewing our treatment and evaluating the performance of our staff in caring for you.
- **Medical personnel in an emergency situation:** If you cannot make decisions because of a medical emergency, we may disclose your health information to medical personnel involved in your care. We will let you know that this information has been disclosed and will make every effort to obtain your written authorization as soon as the emergency situation has ended.
- **To prevent serious harm to you or others:** If you tell us, or give us reason to believe, that you have a clear plan to hurt a specific person or yourself, we will disclose your health information to help prevent serious harm.
- **Incidents of suspected child abuse and/or neglect:** If you tell us information concerning suspected child abuse and/or neglect, we are required by Florida law to disclose this information. Also, if you tell us information concerning suspected abuse of the elderly or the handicapped, we are required by Florida law to disclose this information.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center healthcare associates:** Some services are provided to Counseling and Wellness Center through our healthcare associates. When services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our healthcare associates so they can do the job we’ve asked them to do. Our contracts with our healthcare associates require them to protect your health information.
- **The Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** We may disclose your identity to the FDA if you are taking a medication that FDA officials have determined may be dangerous to you, due to error in manufacturing or packaging.
- **Law/health oversight agency:** We may disclose your health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure.
- **Law enforcement and specialized governmental functions, under certain circumstances:** For example: If we receive a court order, we will disclose your health information. If you commit, or threaten to commit, a crime on the premises or against program personnel, we may disclose your health information to law enforcement officials. We

- **Research purposes:** In limited circumstances, we may disclose your health information for research purposes. For instance, a research project might involve comparing the health and recovery of all clients receiving one medication to those receiving another medication for the same condition.
- **For clients receiving only mental health treatment, we may disclose your health information for purposes of treatment and health-care operations:** We may disclose your health information to your physician in order to assist your treatment. We may disclose your health information to coordinate your case management.

Your Protected Health Information Rights

Although your health record is the physical property of the Counseling and Wellness Center, the information contained in it belongs to you. You have the right to:

- Obtain a paper copy of this notice of information practices upon request.
- Inspect and copy your health record as provided for in 45 CFR 164.524.
- Amend your health record as provided in 45 CFR 164.528.
- Request copies of authorizations that we have asked you to sign.
- Obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information as provided in 45 CFR 164.528.
- Request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information as provided by 45 CFR 164.522.
- Revoke (in writing) your authorization to use or disclose health care information, except to the extent that action has already been taken.
- Request confidential communication of your health care information by alternative means or at alternative locations. To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing.

Our Responsibilities

- Maintain the privacy of your health care information.
- Provide you with this notice regarding our legal duties and privacy practices regarding information we collect and maintain about you.
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction.
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate health information in a confidential manner.
- Abide by the terms of this notice.

We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected health care information we maintain. If we change our information practices, we will provide a revised notice to you, either in person or by mail at the address you've supplied us. In addition, any revisions to this notice will be posted in the Counseling and Wellness Center. We will not use or disclose your health information without your authorization, except as described in this notice. We will also discontinue to use or disclose your health care information after we have received a written revocation of the authorization, according to the procedures included in the authorization.

For More Information or To Report a Problem

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, if you have questions, or would like additional information, you may contact Anne E. Fisher, Ph.D., Director of the Counseling and Wellness Center at (941) 487-4254.

The Counseling and Wellness Center respects your right to the privacy of your health information. There will be no retaliation in any way for filing a complaint with us or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Office for Civil Rights

**U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D. C. 20201**