

Mental Health Services Policies and Procedures

WHAT IS COUNSELLING

Counselling is a confidential process designed to help you address your concerns, come to a greater understanding of yourself, and learn effective personal and interpersonal skills to help you thrive. It involves a supportive, respectful and understanding relationship between you and a trained counsellor who has the desire and willingness to help you accomplish your individual goals. Counselling involves sharing personal information; this process may sometimes be distressing. In the course of counselling, there may be periods of increased anxiety or emotional discomfort as you work toward change. The process of change in counselling is often positive; however, the level of satisfaction for any individual is not predictable. During your initial session, you and your counsellor will determine an action plan which may include one or more of the following options: self-directed study, online self-help resources, referral to peer support, workshops, group therapy, intensive short-term individual therapy, or referrals to other services. Services are offered by qualified professional counsellors, Psychology Residents or practicum interns. Professional counsellors have obtained either a master's or a doctoral degree in Education, Counselling/Psychotherapy, Psychology, Social Work or a related field. Practicum interns and Residents are supervised closely by experienced professional counsellors and Psychologists. Please feel free to discuss with your counsellor any questions that you may have about the counselling process.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Mental Health Team, provides a collaborative consultation model across its services to provide the best possible care as well as for professional and training purposes. This consultation may include speaking to the Manager or Director to determine next steps. Furthermore, disclosure is required in any of the following circumstances:

- To report to the appropriate authorities any suspicions that a child (i.e., someone who is presently under the age of 16) has been or is being abused or mistreated. This may also involve making a report if there is suspicions that a youth under age 18 needs protection.
- To report to the appropriate authorities any suspicions that a vulnerable person who resides in a Long-Term Care Home or Retirement Home has been or is being abused or neglected.
- If you are in serious and imminent danger of hurting yourself, there is a requirement to reveal to an appropriate third party (including your Emergency Contact person, your parents, and/or emergency personnel) enough information to help you.
- If you are involved in a legal proceeding, the court may subpoena the records.

- If you reveal to us that you have been sexually abused by a health care provider who is covered by the Regulated Health Professions Act (e.g., physicians, psychologists) we are required by law to report the name of the offending member to their governing body. In reporting the health care provider, your name is not released unless you provide written permission for the office to do so. It should be noted that the current legal definition of sexual abuse includes both touching of a sexual nature and demeaning remarks of a sexual nature.

Health and Wellness services, including mental health services takes seriously its role to foster a safe campus for you and for others. By seeking services, you are consenting to an evaluation of the risk that you present to the physical health and safety of yourself and others. Accordingly, any student whose words, actions, or mental health issues in our determination present a potential risk of serious bodily harm to them self or others shall be responded to immediately. This response may include, but is not limited to, consultation with your Emergency Contact person, your parents, other professionals, university personnel or police who may have information relevant to for the University to engage a risk assessment.

HEALTH RECORDS

Mental Health Services have a shared electronic health record within Health and Wellness Services and Residence Counselling. Accordingly, your personal health information, including medical and counselling records, will be maintained in a common, secure, electronic format. All professionals involved in your care will have access to your information and will review only that information relevant to your care. All professionals are bound by professional and university policies around appropriate access to, and confidentiality of information accessed in the course of providing services can care to you.

A note about your academic transcription. Please be assured that information you provide does not become part of your academic record.

NO-SHOW POLICY AND LATENESS

Students are encouraged to make counselling appointments a high priority. To ensure that Mental Health Services are able to provide all students with timely access to our services, please provide at least 24 hours' notice if you are unable to make your appointment. If you do not provide 24 hours' notice and are marked "no-show", you will be asked to wait two weeks from the date of your last scheduled, but missed, appointment, unless you are in crisis. Your Counsellor will mark an appointment "no-show" when you do not provide 24 hours' notice and you are not present for the appointment – we will wait 15 minutes for you.

I have read and understood the Mental Health Services privacy statement, including the policy and procedures outlined above. If I have any questions, I will ask my therapist at the beginning of my appointment.

For video counselling/tele counselling, please also refer to below.

Tele Counselling/Video Counselling

*If you require immediate medical assistance, or if your mental health is rapidly declining, you should not rely on a tele counselling and/or video counselling appointment. In such instances, you should take other measures as appropriate, such as calling Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000, visiting your nearest Emergency Department or urgent care clinic or your local distress line. **Tele counselling and/or video counselling services will not be used for mental health emergencies or other time-sensitive matters.***

NOTICE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the risks, limitations, conditions of use, and instructions for use of tele counselling and/or video counselling. Additional information regarding the conditions, procedures and instructions applicable to such use is set out in the Appendix.

The care provider will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of information sent and received using the tele counselling and/or video counselling services. However, because of the risks outlined below, the care provider cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of certain electronic communications (including tele counselling and/or video counselling) for the following reasons:

- The use of electronic communications to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties;
- Despite reasonable efforts to protect the privacy and security of electronic communication, it is not possible to completely secure information provided through such formats;
- Electronic communications can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored, or changed without the knowledge or permission of the care provider or the student; and
- Electronic communications may be disclosed in accordance with applicable legal obligations, including the duty to report or a court order.

Additionally, there are therapeutic limitations to tele counselling and/or video counselling services. For example, there is the potential for misunderstandings when two people are not in the same room. Your care provider will work to mitigate these challenges.

I understand and accept the risks associated with the use of tele counselling and/or video counselling in my communications with the care provider and their staff. I also consent to the conditions associated with the use of tele counselling and/or video counselling outlined within the Appendix, and will follow the instructions outlined in the Appendix, as well as any other conditions that the care provider may impose on communications with students using tele counselling and/or video counselling services.

I acknowledge and understand that despite recommendations that encryption software be used as a security mechanism for electronic communications, it is possible that my communications with the care provider using tele counselling and/or video counselling

services may not be encrypted. I agree to communicate with the care provider using tele counselling and/or video counselling with a full understanding of such risk.

I acknowledge that either I or my care provider may, at any time, choose to stop participating in tele counselling and/or video counselling services upon the provision of written notice of such intent.

I agree to participate in tele counselling and/or video counselling appointment(s) for the service(s) selected above, and I have reviewed and understand the associated risks, conditions, and instructions.

Appendix

Tele counselling and/or video counselling involves the use of technological applications to enable care providers (Psychologists, Therapists, Case Managers, etc.) to provide care, counselling, or to deliver services remotely to a student. The information set out below is provided in order to enable you to understand the conditions and procedures associated with using tele counselling and/or video counselling so that you can make an informed decision about participating in a tele counselling and/or video counselling appointment:

Conditions Applicable to Use of Tele counselling and/or Video counselling Services:

- While the care provider will attempt to review and respond to electronic communications in a timely manner, the care provider cannot guarantee that all electronic communications will be reviewed and responded to within any specific period of time.
- Electronic communication is not an appropriate substitute for in-person appointments, where appropriate, or for attending the Emergency Department when needed. You are responsible for responding to electronic communications sent by the care provider, and for scheduling follow-up appointments where warranted.
- Electronic communications concerning treatment may be printed or transcribed in full and made part of your electronic health record. Only those individuals authorized to access your electronic health record, such as staff and billing personnel, may have access to those communications.
- The care provider may forward your electronic communications to staff and those involved in the delivery and administration of your care. The care provider will not forward your electronic communications to any third parties, including family members, without your prior written consent, or as required by law.
- The care provider is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures associated with your personal software or internet provider. In the case of a technological failure, your care provider will follow-up with you using an alternate method (i.e., telephone, email).

Tele counselling and/or Video counselling Procedure:

- a) In your first appointment your care provider will discuss the contents of this form with you. This provides you the opportunity to ask questions or express any concerns you might have. The remainder of the session will be spent gathering information about your presenting concerns(s) and/or need(s);
- b) Details of your mental health history and/or previous appointments may be discussed to ensure proper care;
- c) Additional information will need to be gathered during the course of your first appointment to ensure your safety. This includes your exact location during the session(s);

- d) You will be notified if a technical support staff member is present during a tele counselling appointment to aid in the telecommunication transmission. This technician is also bound by the duty of confidentiality;
- e) Reasonable and appropriate efforts have been made to eliminate any confidentiality risks associated with the appointment, and all existing confidentiality and privacy protections under federal and provincial laws apply to information disclosed during the telecounselling and/or videocounselling appointment;
- f) The care provider may determine the need for an in-person appointment to be scheduled at a later date; and
- g) Additional consent form(s) specific to the office(s) your telecounselling and/or videoconselling appointment(s) is with may need to be signed.

Instructions for Communicating Through Telecounselling and/or Videocounselling:

You are required to adhere to the following instructions relating to your use of telecounselling and/or videocounselling:

- You must inform your care provider of any changes in your email address, mobile phone number, or other account information necessary to communicate; and
- You will be required to provide details with respect to your current location (i.e., address) during the telecounselling and/or videocounselling appointment, and to remain at this location if there is any disruption of service during the course of your appointment.

Videocounselling:

- Zoom is an online communication tool allowing face-to-face video, voice, or text-based chat/dialogue. Zoom calling is encrypted to protect sensitive information. For more information on how Zoom keeps its client's information private, please visit and review the information at the links below
<https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy-and-security.html>
- Zoom software is available on any computer or smart phone/tablet. Ensure that your device is password protected and only you have access to the password. In addition, use a password protected private internet connection when on a Zoom call.
- Any Internet-based communication is not 100% guaranteed to be secure/confidential. Western has made every reasonable effort to implement technical security measures that reduce risks of a confidentiality breach.
- You are responsible for ensuring confidentiality by closing other programs on your computer while in a video session, planning to minimize distractions, and not answering calls or text messages while on the Zoom call.
- Please do not share the Zoom link with anybody.

- The session WILL NOT be recorded. Please do not record the session.
- Use of the “chat” function in Zoom is strictly prohibited.
- Please be online five minutes prior to the scheduled video counselling appointment (preferably in a quiet room alone with the door closed). Headphones may be used to increase privacy of session.
- If you and your care provider become disconnected from Zoom or you are having technical difficulty, your care provider will call you on the phone number you have provided to us.

At the Time of Your Appointment:

- a) Your care provider will call you at the telephone number provided on the intake form. If you do not answer, and you have given consent for the care provider to leave a message, they will do so, indicating that they will try to reach you again in 10 minutes. If you do not answer on the second attempt, your appointment will be cancelled.
- b) Please ensure that you are in a safe and quiet place at the time of your appointment. This will help reduce distractions and ensure that confidentiality is maintained throughout the appointment; and
- c) If you have provided a cell phone number, please ensure that your phone is adequately charged and/or that you have the ability to plug your phone in.