



## Counseling Services General Information

We are so pleased you have chosen to seek out support in our office. Please know how much our staff values meeting with students.

This handout is to provide information regarding Counseling Services specifically as it relates to defining counseling, scope of services, and appointment scheduling. We appreciate your time in reviewing this handout. If you have additional questions not covered here, please feel free to bring them up to your clinician.

### **What is counseling?**

A helpful definition of counseling can be found on the American Counseling Association's website:

*"Counseling is a collaborative effort between the counselor and client. Professional counselors help clients identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil; seek to improve communication and coping skills; strengthen self-esteem; and promote behavior change and optimal mental health"* (from <https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling/overview>).

It is helpful to keep this definition in mind as you and your clinician identify goals, look to develop strategies to improve coping, and work on behavior changes to enhance wellbeing. Please see the "Statement of Informed Consent" that is signed and reviewed at the first appointment of the academic year for more information on the intake and counseling process here, as well as for information on confidentiality and its limits.

### **What counseling-related services can I receive on-campus?**

Our counseling staff is comprised of mental health counselors, social workers, psychologists, and graduate-level interns completing clinical internships. These clinicians provide:

- Intake appointments: initial sessions to determine level of therapeutic care
- Individual counseling: ongoing support, typically on a biweekly basis
- Urgent appointments: please note the definition on the reverse side of this handout
- Case management: periodic check-ins for students with off-campus providers
- Mandated assessments: administrative referrals made by personnel from Student Affairs

You may find that you benefit from simply attending one or two sessions for general support and strategies around a short-term need. You may also express interest in and benefit from ongoing counseling. If so, Counseling Services' model of ongoing support is that you will be seen on a biweekly (every other week) basis. Occasionally, around intake and initial rapport periods, times of transition, and times of crisis, you may be briefly accommodated with weekly sessions as is deemed clinically appropriate. If you are engaged in regular, ongoing contact with a clinician in this office, you may be eligible to also meet with our consulting psychiatric nurse practitioner around medication needs during the academic year when clinically appropriate. If you are interested in this service, we have an additional handout about psychiatric services. Please consult with your clinician for more information and to explore if this may be an appropriate referral for you, or if there are other resources that may better fit your needs.

### **When will I be referred off-campus for services?**

Our clinicians can provide case management support when students need to be referred to off-campus providers. We maintain a list of local providers and the clinicians here will meet with you to provide guidance around how to access off-campus providers and utilize your health insurance plan(s) in these types of situations. We can also assist with finding providers in your home area. A variety of circumstances may warrant referral off-campus:

- If you wish to engage in more frequent counseling than our biweekly model
- If our appointment offerings are not compatible with your schedule
- If you are assessed to clinically warrant long-term weekly therapy, specialized therapy or evaluation, or a higher level of care
- If you are in need of counseling when away from the college on official breaks (e.g.: summer, winter)
- If you are leaving the College
- If you are in need of psychiatric consultation outside of the academic year
- If you are in need of documentation for accommodations through the Office of Accessibility Resources

### **What are urgent sessions?**

Students primarily utilize our routine appointments such as intakes and individual counseling sessions. For scenarios that are critical and time-sensitive, we do offer some urgent slots throughout the week, in case a student needs to be seen sooner than the next available routine appointment. Urgent sessions are appointment-based. Urgent appointments can be made by calling or stopping by the front desk to set up an urgent appointment. When you request an urgent session, you will be scheduled for the next available open urgent slot and covering clinician. You may wish to request these sessions when experiencing crisis such as:

- Significant impairment in functioning
- Safety concerns
- Need for stabilization
- Short-term problem solving strategies for time-sensitive dilemmas

### **Can I change my counselor?**

The counseling process involves an ongoing therapeutic alliance between the client and the clinician. While the clinicians in this office all practice as generalists, we recognize that there may be differences in therapeutic styles. Occasionally, students request a change in ongoing clinician.

If you are considering a change, we are unable to accommodate these types of requests via a phone call to the office manager. We believe it is therapeutically beneficial for you to make this request directly to your current clinician when possible, so that the clinician and you can work collaboratively to either modify your work together or figure out alternative options. If you are unable to discuss this desire for change with your current ongoing clinician, then you should request a 15 minute consultation with the Director or Associate Director who would be happy to consult about needs, counseling goals, and desire for a change, and then make a plan for next steps. Please note, it is not always possible for us to honor requests to be matched with specific staff members.

### **What happens if I can't make an appointment?**

Please notify the office in advance if you are going to be unable to make an appointment. The office manager can review with you options for rescheduling and/or confirm your next scheduled appointment. If you do not show for a scheduled appointment, your clinician will outreach in writing via your preferred mode of contact (typically email). Following a "no show," you will be asked to confirm your next appointment (if one has been scheduled for you) by a deadline. If you do not confirm your appointment by that deadline, or if you have two consecutive "no shows," we will assume you are no longer interested in counseling and we will release future appointment slots for other students to utilize. Additionally, students who cancel and/or "no show" for three or more total sessions (counseling or psychiatry) in a semester, or have a lapse greater than 1 month between counseling sessions, may be considered ineligible for the services of the psychiatric nurse practitioner and may be transferred off-campus for psychiatric support.