



## RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PERSONS USING THE SERVICES OF THE STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER

Welcome to the Texas Tech University Student Counseling Center. We offer confidential services to our students for a variety of personal concerns. This is a summary of important information that you should know about our services; please take a few minutes to read it. Because the Student Counseling Center serves individuals with a wide range of concerns, some of this information may not be relevant to your particular situation; however, it is important that you read all the material. Should you have any questions about this information, please feel free to discuss them with your triage counselor.

### I. RIGHTS

#### Understanding the Purpose and Nature of Services:

Psychotherapists help individuals with mental or emotional difficulties such as depression or anxiety, interpersonal or family problems, adjustment difficulties, grief recovery, and a number of other issues. Psychotherapy is intended to help the individual reach a better understanding of specific problems and, at times, work toward resolution of this problem, symptom relief, or improvement in day to day functioning. It is a joint effort between the therapist and client to alleviate the problem. Progress depends on many factors such as the complexity and duration of the problem, the skill of the therapist, the motivation of the client, and other life circumstances. While results cannot be guaranteed, most clients find that they benefit from psychotherapy.

#### Eligibility:

Full or part-time students who are currently enrolled at Texas Tech University are eligible for a voluntary and confidential triage appointment. During this appointment, the student and counselor will discuss counseling options which may include individual, group, or couples counseling at this Center or a referral to comparable or more appropriate services in the community. Our Center offers short-term individual and couples counseling, and we will refer students who do not meet SCC Scope of Care criteria (e.g., in need of extended or specialized services).

#### Prompt Service:

The initial appointment with the triage counselor for screening/assessment purposes will be fairly brief (20-30 minutes). If you return to the Center for services following the triage session, it probably will not be with the initial triage counselor. Your case will be reviewed by our Clinical Services Director, and you will be contacted as soon as possible with information about your next appointment, unless an appointment is arranged immediately following your triage session. At busy times during the semester, the Student Counseling Center may have a waiting list for services. Our waiting list is generally managed on a first come, first served basis. If, however, you experience extreme distress before you are assigned to a counselor, please contact us so that crisis intervention services can be arranged.

#### Understanding the Risks Involved with Psychotherapy:

As with any treatment, there are some risks that may come along with potential benefits. Therapy can result in some individual change and unleash strong feelings. There is a risk that clients will, for a time, have uncomfortable levels of sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, helplessness or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories that may be bothersome. You should be aware of the possibility for strain in significant relationships that may occur during therapy. Couples counseling can, on occasion, result in the dissolution of the relationship. Sometimes, it is possible for a client's problem to worsen immediately after beginning therapy. However, most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives.

#### Confidentiality:

Information shared by you in a counseling session, or through testing, will be kept in strict confidence. The Student Counseling Center staff operates as a team in order to provide the best possible services to clients. As professionals we confer with each other within the agency. These consultations are for professional and/or training purposes only. No client information is released to anyone outside of the Student Counseling Center without written authorization from the client. This restriction applies to other faculty, parents, university offices, or any other entity with the following exceptions in which we may be legally obligated to release information without your authorization in the following situations:

- 1.) Abuse of Children, Elderly, or Disabled Persons. If a staff member has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18, an elderly person, or a disabled person is being abused or neglected, s/he is legally obligated to report this situation to the appropriate state agency.
- 2.) Imminent Harm to Self. If a staff member has reason to believe that you are in danger of physically harming yourself, and if you are unwilling or unable to follow treatment recommendations, s/he may have to recommend involuntary hospitalization and/or contact a family member or another person who may be able to help protect you.

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### 3.) Imminent Harm to Others.

If a staff member has reason to believe that you are seriously threatening physical violence against another person, or if you have a history of physically violent behavior, and if s/he believes that you are an actual threat to the safety of another person, s/he may take action (such as contacting the police or seeking involuntary hospitalization) to ensure that the other person is protected.

### 4.) Reports of Sexual Exploitation by a Former Therapist.

If a staff member has reason to believe that you have been the victim of sexual exploitation by a former therapist, s/he is obligated to contact the licensing board which oversees the professional activities of the therapist in question.

### 5.) Court Orders for Records Release, Depositions, and Testimony.

In the State of Texas, when a judge issues a subpoena for records or testimony, SCC personnel must comply with the court order.

Please Note: The exceptions to confidentiality are extremely rare. However, if they should occur it is the Center's policy that, whenever possible, we will discuss with you any action that is being considered. Legally we are not obligated to seek your permission, especially if such a discussion would prevent us from securing your safety or the safety of others. If disclosure of confidential information does become necessary, we will

## II. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Requests for Letters Verifying SCC Services:

Appointment attendance notes can be provided to students at any time. A minimum of three SCC visits are required before any letter citing a diagnosis will be considered. It is at the discretion of the treating therapist whether or not a letter will be written on a student's behalf. Since the SCC does not employ accommodation specialists, the SCC does not provide letters regarding academic or living accommodations (e.g., pet accommodations, special allowances for classes, etc.). Requests for accommodations should be directed to Student Disability Services. Letters to the Dean of Students Office supporting a medical withdrawal may be provided in extreme circumstances.

### Participation:

Your active participation in the counseling process is necessary for progress to be made. Counseling sessions are usually held on a weekly basis (45 minutes for individual; 90 minutes for group therapy). Your promptness for these sessions will allow you to take full advantage of your appointments. Once you have been assigned to a counselor, it is your responsibility to keep scheduled appointments. If an emergency arises, please cancel your appointment by calling the receptionist at the Center, preferably one day in advance. If your attendance to appointments is consistently irregular, we cannot guarantee that your appointment time will continue to be held for you.

### Social Media Policy:

Use of online communication can impact your confidentiality and privacy, and may also need to be documented in your file. Subsequently, SCC therapists will not accept friend/contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site. In addition, please do not use private or

release only the information necessary to protect you and/or another person's physical safety.

Additionally, we may share client information in the form of consultation with health providers at the Texas Tech University Student Health Services or the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center for the sole purposes of treatment planning and coordination of care. This single exception may be revoked via a written request by the client.

Group Therapy participants: while we strongly encourage group members to respect each other's confidentiality, SCC personnel cannot ensure this.

### Access/Retention of Records:

Your SCC records are stored in a computer database on a TTU server, accessible only to SCC personnel and TTU tech support professionals who maintain confidentiality. You have the right to access your records at any time. All records are destroyed 7 years after your last visit.

### Contacting your therapist:

The SCC utilizes Microsoft Lync for our phone system. As such, all voicemails left for your therapist are delivered via email and may include identifying information. Therapists may not have immediate access to voicemail and/or email; accordingly, these message systems are not an appropriate mechanism for crisis management. If in immediate danger, call 911 for assistance.

public online messaging services to contact therapists whom you may interact with in the SCC.

### No-Show Policy:

If you miss a scheduled appointment with your counselor and have not canceled in advance, you are responsible for calling to reschedule an appointment or for informing the counselor that you are no longer interested in receiving counseling services. If we do not hear from you within 24 hours of a missed appointment, we may not be able to keep an appointment time open for you. Please make every effort to contact SCC in advance if you cannot make your appointment time. Missed appointments without prior contact are considered no-shows, and effective 10-1-17, no-shows will result in a \$25 charge to your TTU Student Business Services bill. The charge will appear as "Student Wellness Center Appointment Fee." You have the right to appeal this fee within 4 weeks of the missed appointment if it was due to an emergency during which you were unable to contact the SCC. If you quit attending sessions at the SCC, we will assume that you have terminated services with us.

### Feedback:

The Student Counseling Center staff is interested in any feedback you may have regarding the services you receive. You will have an opportunity to provide feedback on our SCC evaluation. We appreciate your input as it assists us in ongoing service evaluation. You are also welcome to provide us with feedback at any time during the therapy process. If for any reason you are not satisfied with the counseling process, we encourage you to discuss this first with your counselor. If your concerns are not resolved to your satisfaction, you may request an appointment with the Clinical Services Director to discuss possible reassignment or other counseling options.

### **III. GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT**

#### Psychological Assessment:

Assessment may be suggested as part of your treatment. While the assessment may ask questions regarding suicidality, your counselor may not see your responses immediately. When completing assessments, please inform SCC staff if you are in extreme distress. Assessment will not be offered as part of an ongoing or pending court proceeding. We do not offer testing for ADHD or Learning Disabilities but can provide community referrals for these assessments.

#### Video Recording:

In order to ensure that you receive the highest quality service possible, Student Counseling Center policy requires all therapists in training to video record all sessions with the exception of Triages. Each video recording is stored for a limited time on the Center's secure server for supervision and training purposes only. The Student Counseling Center will preserve your privacy, maintain strict confidentiality, and your identity will not be revealed. You have the right to withdraw your consent to recording at any time, but doing so may result in a delay of services.

#### Research:

The Student Counseling Center participates in national and institutional research projects designed to improve our services and expand knowledge about college student mental health. We contribute anonymous, numeric client data which is stripped of all personally identifying information to national and institutional databases. The information is then combined with additional anonymous, numeric data and is statistically analyzed. Neither the data nor the results can be linked to specific individuals.