

# INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUNSELING SERVICES

## UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

### COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS)

**Eligibility:** All Counseling services of the University of Houston Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are available to currently enrolled students at the University of Houston. Certain limited services are also available to faculty and staff, and partners of students currently enrolled at the University of Houston.

**Counseling Services:** CAPS operates according to a stepped care model where service recommendations are made based on an initial assessment that tries to match each student to the most efficient and appropriate service based on the student's presenting concern. Currently CAPS is offering a multitude of variable length services including Essential Skills Workshops, Single Session Therapy (SST), Group Counseling, Short-Term Individual Counseling, and Short-Term Couples Counseling. A student may be referred for a less time intensive service first if appropriate, and may be "stepped up" to a more time-intensive offering if the initial service does not resolve or improve the presenting concern. If the needs of a student cannot be accommodated through one of the services offered at CAPS, we will help facilitate a referral to another local provider who can provide longer-term or more specialized services.

**A referral to a local provider may be provided in the following situations:**

- Ongoing treatment for a student who presents imminent danger to self or others, or is unable to care for themselves. (e.g., a student who seems determined to harm themselves, and has feasible plan to do so; or a student who is experiencing hallucinations and delusions).
- Court-ordered or forensically oriented treatment (e.g., substance abuse treatment, treatment for criminal behavior such as rape or pedophilia, etc.).
- Treatment for disorders of such severity that we cannot provide adequate care (e.g., treatment for a severe eating disorder that requires closely coordinated medical, nutritional, psychiatric, and psychological care).
- Treatment that falls beyond our areas of expertise or outside the scope of services provided by this facility (e.g., a student requesting a higher frequency of services than we can provide).
- Treatment for a student who seeks counseling but nevertheless is fundamentally unwilling to address the disorder in question (e.g., a student who is addicted to cocaine, but adamantly refuses to consider curbing or receive treatment for their drug use).
- Treatment for a student who seeks counseling but nevertheless is noncompliant with the clinician's treatment recommendations (e.g., client who does not take prescribed medication).
- Treatment for a student whose behavior creates a hostile working environment at the Counseling and Psychological Services office, affecting staff and/or other students (e.g., a student who is verbally abusive towards and/threatens staff).
- Treatment for a student who seeks counseling but nevertheless is noncompliant with CAPS' policies (e.g., inappropriately utilizing daytime and/or after hours crisis services).
- Requests for certain types of documentation to meet specific legal or administrative requirements (such as letters in support of having an emotional support animal, and other requests that a CAPS clinician does not feel competent or confident to endorse within the scope of our generalist and short-term treatment practice).
- Other situations that are determined to be outside of the scope of services provided by this facility or in which case an appropriate clinical staff member determines that treatment to a particular student/client would not be in the best interest of the student/client, another student/client or the proper functioning of this agency.

**The Counseling Process:** The counseling process is a partnership between you and a CAPS clinician (“clinician”) to work on areas of dissatisfaction in your life or assist you with life goals. For counseling to be most effective, it is important that you take an active role in the process. This involves keeping scheduled appointments, listening to the clinician, being honest with the clinician, discussing the counseling process with the clinician, and completing outside assignments agreed upon with the clinician. Counseling can have both benefits and risks. While counseling can be of benefit to most people, the counseling process is not always helpful. The counseling process also can evoke strong feelings and sometimes produce unanticipated changes in one’s behavior. It is important that you discuss with a clinician any questions or discomfort you have regarding the counseling process or any behavioral changes you may be experiencing. Your clinician may be able to help you understand the experience and/or use different methods or techniques that may be more satisfying.

**Confidentiality:** CAPS recognizes that confidentiality is essential to effective counseling. We believe that for counseling to work best, you must feel safe about sharing personal information about yourself with your clinician. When you share information about yourself with your clinician, he or she will respect the importance of that information. Your records from CAPS are not part of your student record. Counseling records are destroyed 7 years after your last contact with us in a way that protects your privacy. Under most circumstances, all information about you obtained in the counseling process (including your identity as a client) is confidential and will be released to other parties only with your expressed written consent. However, it is because of the strength of our belief in the importance of you feeling safe about sharing information about yourself with your clinician that we want to inform you about the circumstances in which we may share information about you without your consent.

- Information Released to other professionals involved in your treatment. Most commonly, this would be the other members of the counseling staff at CAPS, or the psychiatric staff of the University of Houston Student Health Center (“Student Health Center”) if you are also being seen there
- If you are under 18, your parents or legal guardian(s) may have access to your records and may authorize their release to other parties
- If you are reasonably suspected to be in imminent danger of harming yourself or someone else
- If you disclose abuse or neglect of children, the elderly, or disabled persons
- If you disclose sexual misconduct by a therapist
- To comply with mandate to transmit statistics to the university (EOS) regarding sexual misconduct by or against you that you report to us during your treatment and that occurred while you were employed or studying at UH. We are to indicate only the type of incident reported and may not include any information that would violate a student’s expectation of privacy. The reporting of these statistics will not trigger an investigation by EOS or lead to any other action.
- To qualified personnel for certain kinds of program audits or evaluations
- In criminal proceedings
- In legal or regulatory actions against a professional
- Upon the issuance of a court order or lawfully issued subpoena
- If assistance from legal counsel is deemed necessary to handle a records request
- Where otherwise legally required

The above is considered to be only a summary. If you have questions about specific situations or any aspect of the confidentiality of CAPS records, please ask a member of the counseling staff.

**Consultation:** Your clinician may discuss information about you with other professionals within CAPS for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment planning, or clinician supervision. When appropriate, clinicians consult with the psychiatry staff of the Student Health Center. This includes sharing information between agencies

(i.e., between CAPS and the Student Health Center), which may be helpful in the conduct or planning of treatment.

**Counseling Records:** Counseling records are stored in locked files and/or electronically on a secure server that is only accessible by our staff. Upon request, you may review your counseling records. In order to ensure the information contained is clearly understood, you will be asked to arrange an appointment with your clinician or another member of the counseling staff to go over the information. Appropriate fees will be charged for making copies of client records.

**Clinician Qualifications:** For quality control and for training and supervision purposes, all clinicians at CAPS reserve the right to video-record therapy sessions. Clinicians in training may also have a supervisor observe your session in person. If you do not sign a separate form expressing that you wish to opt out from having session recorded it is assumed you agree to these terms. You may ask your clinician for an opt-out form. Any clinician that may view sessions or session recordings at CAPS is bound by the confidentiality standards detailed in this Informed Consent for Counseling Services form.

**Counseling Decisions:** Frequency of sessions, number of sessions, goals, type of counseling and any alternative counseling methods will be discussed and negotiated between you and your clinician. You are encouraged to regularly discuss your progress and review your goals with your clinician. If you have questions about recommendations or the approach used by clinician, please discuss your questions or concerns with the clinician. If you feel these recommendations are not appropriate, you may refuse to accept them. If you feel you are not making satisfactory progress toward your goals, please discuss this with your clinician, if you are unable to resolve questions or concerns you have about the progress of counseling, you may request to be transferred to another clinician or agency.

**Access to Service:** In order to provide you with timely assistance, initial appointments at CAPS are offered on a walk-in basis. If you are interested in our services, simply come to CAPS at the Main campus between 8:30 and 4, Monday – Friday. If you are experiencing a crisis situation and need to speak with someone immediately, please contact CAPS at 713.743.5454 or walk into CAPS. If it is after business hours and you are in imminent crisis, please call 911 or CAPS at 713.743.5454 and you will be connected to the after-hours counselor.

**Email:** CAPS seeks at all times to maintain and respect the confidentiality of each client, including not only the details of any services rendered, but also the fact that an individual may be in contact with CAPS. With this in mind, CAPS wishes to remind each person that email is not a secure form of communication. Because confidentiality cannot be assured, the use of email is discouraged in regard to communications with CAPS. When necessary, email may be used for scheduling appointments but should not be used for counseling purposes. The suitability of any clinical consultations or recommendations can only be determined through counseling sessions. E-mail messages are not appropriate for emergency or time-critical situations. The fastest way to contact CAPS is by phone. Please call your clinician or the office directly (713-743-5454) if your message is time-critical. **If it is after office hours and you are in imminent crisis, please call 911 or call the UH CAPS main number at 713-743-5454.**

**Counseling Appointments:** Your clinician can be expected to respect you as an individual and to convey this respect by keeping appointments or contacting you if a change in times is necessary, by giving you his/her complete attention during sessions, and by avoiding interruptions during sessions. On rare occasions however, sessions may be interrupted if your clinician is called to respond to a crisis. It is also expected that you will be prompt for appointments, and that you will call CAPS in advance if you will be more than a few minutes late or have to miss an appointment.

**Fees:** Fees are charged for some CAPS services. Triage appointments, group counseling sessions, and essential skills workshops are free. Current UH students are charged a \$5 session fee for individual counseling

and single session therapy (SST). Couple's counseling sessions are \$10 per session. Staff and faculty are only eligible for crisis services.

**No-Show/Late Cancellation Charges:** CAPS charges clients \$25 per person for failing to provide advanced notice when unable to attend an individual counseling session or couples' counseling session. If a client does not provide notice within 24 hours of his/her scheduled appointment, the \$25 fee will be charged to the client's student account. If the client is not affiliated with UH, the client will be asked to pay at his/her next scheduled appointment. Clients may leave a message on CAPS' voicemail to cancel an appointment; however this message must be left at least 24 hours before the scheduled appointment.

**Late Arrival:** Being more than 15 minutes late for an appointment may result in having your appointment rescheduled. As long as you arrive within your appointment window you will not be charged a no-show fee.

**Client Satisfaction Surveys:** CAPS will periodically administer satisfaction questionnaires in the course treatment.

### Consent

I certify that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the information, terms and conditions contained in this Informed Consent for Counseling Services form. I have had the opportunity to discuss any questions about the information contained in this form, or any other aspect of CAPS services. I hereby give my consent to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to evaluate, provide counseling services and/or refer me to others as needed.

Client's Printed Name:

PeopleSoft ID Number:

Client Signature:

Date: