**Informed Consent for Counseling**

**Student Counseling Services**

**University of North Alabama**

**Welcome to Student Counseling Services!**  In order to serve you better, we would like to provide you with important information regarding your treatment. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss these with your counselor.

# General Information

Services provided by Student Counseling Services for counseling are offered to all students at the University of North Alabama who are currently enrolled in classes and have paid tuition. Student Counseling Services hours of operation are Monday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Tuesday 9:30 am to 4:30 pm and Wednesday through Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Please note that the last appointment of the day will be taken no later than 3:30 pm to ensure adequate care. Our website contains more detailed information about our services and philosophy, as well as a variety of self-help materials and online screening for specific concerns such as eating disorders, anxiety, depression, and substance misuse. Student Counseling Services web address is www.una.edu/counseling/.

# Emergency Information

Should an after-hours emergency arise, you should contact the University Campus Police at 256-765-4357 or dial 9-1-1. You may also contact our local on call service at 256-764-3431 or the national suicide hotline at 1-800-273-8255. If you believe you are in immediate danger of hurting yourself or someone else you should proceed to the nearest emergency room for assistance.

# Your First Appointment

During your first visit, you will spend time with a mental health professional discussing your immediate concerns.

This will help both you and your counselor decide how Student Counseling Services can best help you. These services may consist of referrals to other campus supports, referral to peer support groups, self-help psychoeducation resources, single session visits, individual counseling, group counseling, psycho-educational workshops, and/or an appointment with a consulting psychiatric nurse practitioner to discuss possible medication management of your symptoms along with counseling. In some instances, you may be referred to an off-campus service for longer-term, intensive therapy or some other mental health expertise not offered through Student Counseling Services.

# Additional Appointments

If it is mutually decided that additional individual sessions at Student Counseling Services are needed, you will be assigned to one of the staff counselors for this purpose. This counselor may or may not be the same person you saw during your initial appointment. Most counseling sessions are scheduled for 30 minutes and for a maximum of 50 minutes. You have the right to request a change to a different counselor if you so desire after consultation with your current therapist. During an early visit with your counselor, you will decide the goals of your work and the approximate length of the counseling contract. Because of the large number of students requesting counseling, Student Counseling Services generally provides solution focused short-term therapy.

# Cancellations and Not Showing-Up for an Appointment

A personal commitment is crucial to the success of counseling. Please keep all of your scheduled appointments. If you need to cancel, do so as far in advance as possible. If you “no-show” for an appointment, and do not call within 48 hours to reschedule, your appointment time may be assigned to another student. A series of missed appointments may necessitate referral to an off-campus provider.

# Staff and Qualifications

Student Counseling Services staff is composed of licensed professional counselors, associate licensed counselors under the supervision of a licensed professional counselor, and master’s level interns in counseling. In addition, UNA contracts with FastPace Behavioral Health for consulting psychiatric nurse practitioner services. All clinical staff are supervised by the Director of Counseling here at Student Counseling Services. Your counselor’s professional license is displayed in his/her office. Please ask your counselor if you have any questions about her/his professional training and license.

# Confidentiality and Records

Student Counseling Services adheres to the statutes of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act which require that all client information be held in confidence subject to certain exceptions. To provide effective service, and as consultation/supervision is a standard component of professional practice, your counselor may discuss your case with other Student Counseling Services staff (i.e. supervisors or colleagues). Except in circumstances described below, no one outside of Student Counseling Services will be given any information (even the fact that you have had contact with Student Counseling Services) without your consent; parents, professors, other students, or college administrators may not have access to information about your Counseling visits without your written permission.

Student Counseling Services is a confidential reporting agency and adheres to the strictest HIPPA guidelines to protect your confidentiality. A counselor’s notes and any other written information regarding your contact with the Student Counseling Services never become part of your college record and are accessible only by Student Counseling Services staff. Counseling files are maintained in a secured system for ten years after the student’s graduation or end of service and then destroyed. With your written authorization, counseling information can be disclosed to a third party for the specific purpose stated in your authorization. However, there are certain circumstances where the Student Counseling Services has the right to deny your request.

You may request to review your counseling records by filing a written authorization with the Director of Student Counseling Services. Your request must be responded to within a reasonable period of time. A member of the Student Counseling Services staff shall be present while you review the file in order to discuss or help interpret information contained in the file.

# Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are certain circumstances in which legal statutes require or allow mental health professionals to break confidentiality, without consent if necessary. These include circumstances where there is serious danger to self or others, or suspicion of child, elder, or the abuse of a disabled or disadvantaged person. Also, in rare instances, counseling records may be subject to court subpoena. In the event of after-hours emergent situations, information may also be shared with necessary campus personnel (i.e. University Police, Vice President of Student Affairs, and/or Residential Life Administrators) to provide safety and support. If you have any questions or concerns about these exceptions, please ask your counselor for further information.

## Electronic Mail and Telephone Communications

Students should be aware that confidentiality of electronic mail (e-mail) transmission cannot be guaranteed. For this reason, the Student Counseling Services discourages the sharing of compromising personal or clinical information through this medium. In addition, students should be aware that Student Counseling Services staff may not always have immediate access to nor monitor their email communications on a daily basis. By registering your UNA email address on the admissions forms, you are authorizing communication regarding appointment information to that UNA address only.

Telephone communication for appointments or follow up is sometimes necessary. By registering your personal phone number during the admissions process you are giving Student Counseling Services permission to contact you and/or leave a message on that number only.

## Risks and Benefits of Counseling

There are risks and benefits associated with counseling. Counseling may involve the risk of remembering unpleasant events and may arouse strong feelings. Benefits of counseling typically include symptom relief, an enhanced sense of well-being, and increased ability to cope with peer and family relationships and academic pressures. You may also gain a better understanding of yourself which will assist in your personal development.

## Mutual Respect

Counseling is based on an underlying principle of deep respect for each student who comes for help. Student Counseling Services is committed to this principle and expects students in turn to behave in a respectful manner with clinical staff and the administrative assistant. Verbal abuse may trigger termination of services with a referral to the Vice President of Student Affairs for follow-up. No form of physical violence will be tolerated.

## Feedback from You

Student Counseling Services is interested in your feedback. Toward each semesters end, we will ask you to provide us with feedback through an evaluation form. All comments will be anonymous. In addition, should you have an immediate complaint, please request a Complaint Form from the receptionist. You can also give immediate feedback to the Director of Student Counseling Services, at 256-765-5215.