

Aurora University Counseling Services Informed Consent and Policy of Confidentiality

Aurora University Counseling Services provides assessment, short-term personal counseling, relationship counseling, group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, and referral services. All of our clinical services are confidential and free of charge. Counseling Services also supports outreach, training, and research activities.

Confidentiality. All information gathered by Counseling Services is considered confidential, and the identity of those who use Counseling Services is also regarded as confidential. Please note that due to the shared waiting area and shared front desk staff, Wellness Center staff members have access to scheduling information for our office. The Wellness Center follows the same strict guidelines for confidentiality as Counseling Services, and they do not have access to any information contained within your clinical file. A record of services provided is retained by Counseling Services and will be destroyed after seven years. Such information is kept in a locked file cabinet and/or on a secure university server. Records maintained by Counseling Services are considered medical records and protected health information. Your counseling records are NOT part of your academic or administrative records.

In order to ensure the highest quality of care, at times your counselor may need to consult with other AU Counseling Services staff under the same confidentiality protection. In compliance with the Health and Privacy Act of 1996 (HIPPA), Counseling Services requires your written consent before disclosing any personal health information. Therefore, when it is appropriate to discuss confidential information with individuals outside of AU Counseling Services, you will be asked to sign a release form to permit this exchange of information. You have the right to deny such a request, and you may revoke your consent at any time by providing written notice. In rare cases where there is a risk to the student or the community; Counseling Services reserves the right to notify the Vice President of Student Life, Campus Public Safety, or other appropriate university officials.

According to Illinois law, you need to be aware of a few exceptions to the rules of confidentiality. If it is determined that you may seriously harm yourself or someone else, counselors have a duty to warn and take action. If a clear and present danger to self or others is determined, Counseling Services staff are also required to report the appropriate information to Illinois State Police (Pursuant to 430 ILCS65/8.1(d)(2) and 430 ILCS66/105). This action may revoke your Firearm Owners Identification (FOID) card. Counselors are also required by state law to report to appropriate agencies any instance of suspected child, elder, or other abuse to individuals unable to care for themselves. Additionally, when a client is involved in a legal proceeding that requires a release of records by court order, counselors must comply. In all cases, your counselor will make every reasonable effort to discuss and resolve these issues with you before any action is taken.

Initial Appointment. During your first appointment, your counselor will help you clarify your concerns and goals for counseling, and will determine what services will be most effective for you. Depending upon the nature of your concern, current service demands, or when counseling services is unable to provide the type of service you need you may be provided with a referral. When a referral is necessary your counselor will assist you in identifying appropriate off-campus providers who can better meet your needs.

Counseling Appointments. You have the right to request a specific counselor, or request a different counselor than the one assigned to you. You have the right to discontinue counseling at any time; however, we request that you advise your counselor of your intentions so that other appropriate resources might be suggested.

Training. Counseling Services is a training site and your counselor may be a counselor in training. All trainees practice under the supervision of a licensed staff member, and will inform you of the name of their supervisor, who you have the right to contact at any time. In order to provide adequate supervision and training, trainee staff are required to video record all counseling sessions. If your assigned counselor is in training, you will be asked to give separate written consent before any recording occurs. Your decision about recording will not impact your ability to receive services.

Research and Evaluation. Counseling Services seeks to evaluate and improve its services by conducting research and evaluation projects. You may, therefore, be asked to participate in research projects currently underway. Staff members conducting research and evaluation projects may also take selected information from your file as part of a project. This activity would always be on an anonymous and confidential basis, with data being presented only in aggregate or summary form.

E-Mail Policy. We welcome your contact, and we value your privacy. Because e-mail is not a secure medium, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If you are in any way concerned about the contents of your e-mail being read by others, please consider another means of communication. Counseling Services staff members do not maintain 24-hour access to e-mail accounts; therefore we cannot guarantee that messages will be read within a given period of time. Thus, e-mail is not an appropriate form of communication for treatment concerns. We highly recommend that if you choose to communicate via e-mail, you limit your communication to scheduling purposes only.

Social Networking Policy. Counseling Services staff members will not actively nor intentionally use social networking sites to gain information on any enrolled students. Additionally, we do not accept “friend” requests from current students who are receiving counseling at Counseling Services. Thank you for understanding.

Client Responsibilities.

- Please make every effort to arrive on time for appointments. As a courtesy to the staff and other students, please provide 24 hour notice if you need to cancel or reschedule a session. Clients who consistently miss appointments without notification may have those services terminated or restricted. **No student will be denied services in crisis/emergency situations.**
- You are responsible for rescheduling missed appointments. If you miss an appointment and do not reschedule within six weeks (or before the semester ends, whichever comes first), we will assume you are no longer interested in receiving services and your file will be closed. You may choose to return for services at any time, but will need to update all paperwork and complete a new intake session. In the event that you discontinue and resume services in this manner, we will not be able to guarantee assignment to the same counselor.
- You are expected to attend appointments without being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- You are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all Counseling Services staff members. Failure to do so may also result in termination of services.

Client Rights. Because we are counseling professionals we strive to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment at Counseling Services, please bring these issues to the attention of your counselor or another staff member. You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of your race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, or abilities. You have the right to review with your counselor the records in your file. Additionally you have a right to request a copy of your records. Typically, you will be asked to meet with your counselor to review the records before they will be released to you.

Benefits and Risks. Counseling may result in better emotional and mental health and positive changes in behaviors and coping ability. However, through the normal process of counseling and discussing your personal concerns, you may experience greater emotional distress at times. You may also find that positive changes you make may result in changes in the relationships in your life (e.g., gaining or becoming closer in relationships, feeling more distant in relationships, losing relationships). If you have any concerns about your progress or the results of your counseling, we encourage you to discuss them with your counselor.

I, _____, voluntarily consent to participate in counseling services. I have read and understand the information above, including the potential uses and disclosures of my protected health information, as well as my rights on these matters. If I have any further questions about this material, I will discuss them with my counselor.

Signature _____ Date _____

The above authorization is given on this client's behalf because the client is a minor or is unable to sign for the following reasons: _____

Signature _____ Date _____
Relative/Guardian/Personal Representative