



Informed Consent for Services

*Converse College Wellness Center
Counseling Services*

We invite you to read this consent prior to initiating counseling services at the Wellness Center. This document is mandated by the South Carolina Code of Laws, as stated in Section §40-75-270 of the Practice Act. Please feel free to ask questions about this document prior to signing it.

ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICES

The clinicians of Converse College's Wellness Center only provide counseling services to currently-enrolled traditional undergraduate students. The Wellness Center offers individual and group counseling. Clinicians may not offer ongoing couple or family therapy unless the student's partner or family member is also a currently-enrolled traditional undergraduate student at Converse.

Some students may require long-term, intensive counseling or specialized mental health care in order to appropriately treat their symptoms; in cases like this, clinicians reserve the right to limit or discontinue services if a student's needs exceed the clinician's scope of practice and/or the range or intensity of services offered at the Wellness Center. Services that are unavailable at the Wellness Center include:

- Treatment at higher levels of care, including inpatient, residential, partial hospitalization, and intensive outpatient
- Eating disorder treatment
- Educational testing
- Substance abuse treatment
- Psychological testing
- Psychiatric medication management
- Psychiatric evaluations
- Case management

Students identified as needing a referral will be assisted in locating an appropriate off-campus provider.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN COUNSELING

During the first appointment, students will meet with a clinician to discuss the problem that led to seeking counseling and to provide personal history and background information. At the conclusion of the initial meeting, treatment options will be discussed, including whether or not counseling needs may be better met by an off-campus clinician or physician. If counseling at the Wellness Center is appropriate, future appointments may or may not be with the same clinician depending on scheduling and the nature of the treatment issues.

Individual sessions are typically 50 to 60 minutes in length. The frequency of sessions and duration of treatment will be determined based on the student's needs and wishes, as well as the clinician's recommendations. Active participation in the counseling process is necessary for counseling progress. Noncompliance with treatment recommendations may necessitate early termination of services. You and your clinician will work together to help determine what treatment is in your best interest.

You may be assigned a graduate student or intern as your clinician; interns receive weekly supervision from a licensed mental health professional. Through this supervision, an intern may discuss your case with a supervisor; however, the intern's supervisor is bound by the same confidentiality and privacy laws as your clinician. Some interns may ask to record your sessions to review with their supervisor; you have the right to decline to be recorded.

FEES

Services at the Wellness Center are included in the health services fee that traditional undergraduate students pay as part of their tuition. There are no additional fees for individual or group therapy, crisis intervention, or consultations with clinicians. Students who are referred to off-campus providers are responsible for any costs associated with these services.

DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION

The clinicians of the Wellness Center do not provide any formal diagnoses in their work with students. If applicable, they may offer diagnostic impressions if doing so is necessary as part of a student's treatment (e.g., if a student is being referred to a psychiatrist to be evaluated for medication for ADHD).

ETHICS

The counseling staff of Converse College's Wellness Center adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines set by South Carolina state law as well as national and state professional ethical codes and guidelines. There are a several ethical considerations that we are required to communicate.

Any type of sexual behavior between clinician and student is unethical. It is never appropriate and will not be condoned.

Social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. are not appropriate means of communication with your clinician as those media may compromise your confidentiality and privacy and blur the boundaries of the professional counseling relationship. Friend or contact requests sent to clinicians by current and former students will not be accepted.

By signing this document, you are indicating your agreement that your participation in counseling services will not include calling a clinician as a witness in a court proceeding. Be aware that once counseling services are initiated, it is unethical for your clinician to give any opinion/recommendation about issues in a legal/court setting such as custody/visitation arrangements or other legal issues, even if your clinician is compelled by a judge to be a witness. Converse College clinicians are not considered forensic experts in legal matters. If a clinician is required by a judge to testify, clinicians are ethically bound not to provide an opinion about a legal matter.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you share in counseling is protected health information and is generally considered confidential by both South Carolina statute law and federal regulations. All conversations, both by telephone and in person, are confidential. Communications may be made by phone and/or email (unless otherwise requested by the student). Any and all records kept by the Wellness Center staff relating to students, aged 18 years of age or older, are kept confidential, except in these cases:

- a) When the student is determined to be a threat to the health and safety of themselves or another, including abuse of a child, elder, or disabled adult. If a clinician determines a student's personal safety or the safety of another person is at risk, clinicians are required by law to take protective actions. This may include notifying family members or other emergency contacts, contacting the police, seeking hospitalization for the student, notifying potential victims of harm, or contacting others who can help provide protection. In the case of abuse, clinicians are required by law to notify the appropriate state agency. If any of these situations occur, every effort will be made by your clinician to fully discuss the situation with you before taking any action.
- b) When documents are court-ordered to be released to the property of the court.
- c) When clinicians/interns discuss case material for the purpose of consultation, supervision, or treatment team planning.
- d) When the student has given consent to share specified information with identified person(s). If you wish your protected health information released to another party, please ask to sign a Release of Information.
- e) Student names and appointment information are shared with front office staff for check-in purposes.

RECORDS

In accordance with South Carolina laws, records will be kept for at least ten years for adult patients and at least thirteen years for minors. These minimum recordkeeping periods begin to run from the last date of treatment. After these minimum recordkeeping periods, hard copy student records will be shredded and computerized student records will be deleted.

Computerized and hard copy student records are accessible only to Wellness Center staff. The Wellness Center administrative assistant will be responsible for storing general student records and managing student information related to scheduling appointments. Counseling session records will be maintained separately in the clinician of record's office. Computerized records are encrypted and password-protected. Counseling records are *not* part of Converse College student records.

E-mail, phone calls, voicemail, and fax are not secure media; therefore, confidentiality of e-mail, phone use, voicemails, and facsimiles cannot be guaranteed. If you and your clinician do choose to communicate via email, those messages should be limited to only administrative purposes, such as cancelling an appointment. Discussion about counseling session content should be limited to face to face or phone communication. If you prefer not to be contacted by email regarding administrative concerns, please indicate that preference on the intake form.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) You have a right to confidentiality within the limitations described above.
- b) You have the right to be involved in your goal setting/treatment planning process and to be informed of the professional members of your treatment team. It is the student's responsibility to make a good faith effort to fulfill the treatment recommendations suggested by your clinician. These recommendations include efforts such as attending appointments as suggested by your clinician; being actively involved during sessions, completing homework assignments; following up with a medication evaluation referral and, if necessary, taking medications as prescribed by your physician; experimenting with new ways of doing things; openly and honestly voicing your opinions, thoughts and feelings, whether negative or positive; and implementing any crisis response plan recommended by your clinician. If you have concerns about treatment suggestions, you are encouraged to express them to your clinician to avoid any misunderstandings.
- c) If during the counseling process your clinician determines he/she is not effective in helping you reach your counseling goals, or if long-term or more specialized treatment is warranted, your clinician is obligated to discuss this with you and, if appropriate, provide appropriate referrals and terminate treatment.
- d) You have the right to be informed of any potential benefits or risks associated with your treatment. It is not uncommon for symptoms to worsen before they improve. Participation in counseling can result in a number of benefits to you, depending on your counseling goals. Working toward these benefits requires effort on your part.
- e) You have the right to refuse treatment and to be involved in determining length and frequency of your treatment.
- f) You have the right to receive treatment from competent mental health care professionals who respect your individualized needs.
- g) You have the right to request another mental health care professional within the department or a referral to an outside professional. Before requesting a transfer to another in-house clinician, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with your clinician or the Director of Counseling and Wellness.
- h) For students 18 years of age or older, access to records/treatment information is available only with a written release of information form, signed by the student. Students may be charged a per-page copying fee (\$0.65 for the first 30 pages; \$0.50 for all other pages), a clerical fee for searching and handling (not to exceed \$15.00), and the cost of postage.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

If you experience a mental health emergency or crisis during the Wellness Center's hours of operation, please call or come to the Wellness Center. We have same-day crisis intervention services available for students in crisis when not being seen immediately could lead to serious consequences or seriously intensify their existing condition.

If you experience a mental health emergency or crisis during evenings or weekends, the following options are available:

- If you are on campus, you may contact your CA or RD and/or call Campus Safety at 864.596.9026.
- You may go to the Spartanburg Regional Emergency Department (101 E. Wood St. Spartanburg; 864.560.6000).
- You may call, text, or chat with a crisis clinician:
 - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress. Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org to chat with a crisis clinician online, or call (800) 273-8255 to speak to a crisis clinician.
 - The Crisis Text Line serves anyone, in any type of crisis, providing access to free, 24/7 support and information via texts. Text START to 741-741 to start texting with a crisis clinician.
- You may dial 911 for medical and other emergencies.

Please note that urgent or emergency communications should not be delivered via voicemail, email, or fax since timeliness of response to these messages cannot be guaranteed.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in such services. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the statements above. I also acknowledge that I have received an email with this document. I understand that I may request a paper copy of this form at any time.

Student Signature

Date

Clinician Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature (if student under 16)

Date