



## **Student Health and Counseling Services Counseling Informed Consent**

You have the right to be informed of our policies and procedures before giving your consent for counseling. Please read this information carefully. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us about the mental health services you will receive and our privacy practices.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

If you are enrolled at California State University San Marcos and have paid the mental health fee, you are eligible for services. Under special circumstances, students who withdraw from the University while being seen at SHCS may continue services briefly with their counselor and the Director's approval. In addition, to remain eligible you must not have misused or abused counseling services in the past (e.g., frequent no shows) and your concerns can be addressed within short-term counseling (as determined by counseling staff). Couple's counseling will only be provided if both individuals in the couple are eligible students at CSUSM.

### **SCOPE OF SERVICE**

Services are provided by licensed mental health professionals, unlicensed mental health clinicians, or psychology interns. All unlicensed clinical staff are supervised by a CA licensed staff member. You have the right to know the professional status of your counselor. If you are seeing an unlicensed counselor, you have the right to contact their supervisor. If you need to do so, call SHCS at (760) 750-4915.

There are instances when your care may not be appropriate to continue with SHCS. If it is determined that your needs might be better met elsewhere, your case is outside the Scope of Service at SHCS, or that you are ineligible for services, the counselor completing the phone consultation will provide referrals and try to assist you in obtaining other services.

You and your partner must be currently enrolled at California State University San Marcos to be eligible for couple's therapy. You and your partner will have the option of being seen individually or referred to an outside service. Couple's counseling will not be provided, or will be ended, if relationship violence (sexual, physical, or threatening behavior) has recently occurred.

We do not release client information for security/employment screening. It is our position that the use of psychological records for this purpose is a misuse of the records, and that meaningful consent cannot be assured when required as part of an employment screening.

## SESSIONS AND CANCELLATIONS

Services will be based on clinical need and determined collaboratively with you. Individual counseling services are provided from a brief-therapy framework with session limits. Individual counseling sessions are usually held weekly or bi-weekly and are approximately 45-50 minutes in length. Groups may be longer-term and can be attended in addition to or independent of individual or couple's counseling. There is no session limit for group therapy.

If you need to cancel an appointment, we ask that you notify us at least 24 hours in advance. Services may be subject to termination after two no-shows, cancellations with fewer than 24 hours' notice ("late cancellations"), or inconsistent attendance.

Unlicensed counselors are required to audiotape and videotape a certain number of counseling sessions for review by their supervisors and, in some cases, other counseling staff, for the purpose of providing you the highest quality care. Your written consent is needed for these recordings. All recordings are locked, kept confidential, and will be erased after being reviewed unless needed for future reference (for which your written permission must also be obtained). You have the right to decline recording. Whether or not you give consent to record will not affect the availability or quality of service.

The first available counselor is the one you will be assigned. You have the right to request a different counselor or appeal your counselor's actions. If you are uncomfortable with something your counselor is doing, or feel that your counselor is acting improperly, we ask that you attempt to resolve the matter with them directly. If unable to resolve the matter with your counselor, or do not want to talk directly with your counselor, we ask that you provide a brief written description of the problem for review by the counselor's supervisor (if the counselor is an intern) or the SHCS CAPS Director, who will discuss the issue with the counselor and take whatever steps are deemed appropriate to address the situation.

If the problem is still not resolved to your satisfaction, you have the right to contact the Associate Director of Student Affairs by calling (760) 750-4915.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

All information disclosed within sessions is confidential and must not be revealed to anyone other than appropriate SHCS staff without your written permission except in situations where disclosure is required by law. These situations include (1) when the counselor believes that a client may be a danger to themselves or another person, and that disclosure is necessary to minimize risk. In the case of danger to another, the counselor is required to notify the police and take reasonable steps to warn the intended victim; (2) there is reasonable suspicion of actual or potential child neglect or abuse (emotional, physical, sexual) involving the client or others known by the client; (3) there is reasonable suspicion that a child has heard or witnessed relationship violence; (4) there is reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse of a dependent adult or elderly person; (5) a client is "gravely disabled" (i.e., unable to take care of basic needs such as feeding self, getting home safely due to a mental health condition); (6) a client seeks counseling for aid in planning a crime or escaping apprehension after committing a

crime; (7) A client initiates legal proceedings to establish competency; (8) a valid court order (e.g., legal subpoena) is issued for a client's files; (9) a client (or client's heirs, executors) files a suit or complaint against a counselor or SHCS.

The law requires that records of services be maintained to help assure that clients are receiving a consistent quality of care. A confidential file will be maintained to provide a record of your services. Records are electronic. SHCS can use your health information and share it with other members of your SHCS health care team (physicians, nurses, counselors, and other clinicians) who are treating you. Information is shared on a strict "need to know" basis. Security measures are in place to limit access to your medical and counseling records to SHCS provider staff only.

## COUGAR HEALTH PORTAL

As a client of Counseling Services, you can access some records related to your care via the Cougar Health Portal accessible through the SHCS Website. It also allows our providers to communicate with you through Secure Messages and protect your privacy by keeping portal credentials secure and confidential. If you need additional documentation, please complete a Counseling Release of Information.

Please note that documentation of your meetings with your therapist can come across as succinct and impersonal. The documentation will not adequately convey the stories that are so important in your life and will not capture the nuances of the work. The notes simply do not reflect your relationship with your therapist; they are a snapshot of key elements of the session. If you have any questions or concerns about the information found in your chart, please contact your therapist to discuss them.

## CONTACTING US

Because electronic mail cannot be a guaranteed means to protect confidential information, counseling staff will not communicate with you via e-mail except in rare circumstances. Thus, a counselor may not respond to your e-mail messages. If you consent via the Cougar Health Portal, email and/or text message reminders can be sent regarding your upcoming appointment. The Cougar Health Portal shall be used for secure messaging between you and your provider. You may also contact SHCS at (760) 750-4915 Monday through Friday between 8:00am – 4:45pm.

In the case of an urgent need after hours, please call (760) 750-4915 to reach a mental health crisis counselor. You can also call one of the community crisis services listed on the *Crisis Resource List* given to you during the phone consultation via the Cougar Health Portal. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, please call University Police at (760) 750-4567, 911 and/or proceed to the nearest emergency room.

## INFORMED CONSENT TO TELEMENTAL HEALTH

This is an addendum to the California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) standard informed consent and does not replace it. All aspects of informed consent for treatment in that document apply to telemental health (TMH) treatment.

In California, "Telehealth" is defined as a method to deliver health care services using information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient's health care while the patient and provider are at two different sites.

This form of service usually consists of live videoconferencing through a personal computer with a webcam. Telemental health is offered to improve access to counseling services to CAPS.

I understand that I have the following rights with respect to telemental health:

- I have the right to withhold or withdraw consent at any time without affecting my right to future care or treatment or risking the loss or withdrawal of any benefits to which I would otherwise be entitled. The laws that protect the confidentiality of my medical information also apply to telemental health.
- I understand that the same laws that give me the right to access my medical information and copies of medical records in accordance with California law also apply to telemental health.
- I understand that the dissemination of any personally identifiable images or information from the telemental health interaction to researchers or other entities shall not occur without my written consent.

I understand the following potential risks, consequences, and limitations of telemental health:

- Telemental health should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face counseling or medication by a physician. It is an alternative form of counseling with certain limitations.
- TMH possible contraindications include, but are not limited to a crisis, acute psychosis, or suicidal or homicidal thoughts.
- TMH may lack visual and/or audio cues, which may increase the likelihood of misunderstanding each other.
- TMH may have disruptions or delays in the service and quality of the technology used.
- In rare cases, security protocols could fail, and your confidential information could be accessed by unauthorized persons.

I understand the following back up plan in case of technology failure:

- The most reliable backup is a phone. Therefore, it is recommended that you always have a phone available and that your provider knows your phone number. If you get disconnected from a telemental health session, end and restart the session.

- If you get disconnected from a telemental health session, end and restart the session. If you are unable to reconnect within five minutes, call your provider. If they do not hear from you within ten minutes, you agree (unless you request otherwise) that your provider can call you on the phone number you listed on the client information form.

#### Emergency Contact:

If you are ever experiencing an emergency, including a mental health crisis, please call 911, University Police at (760) 750-4567, the 24-hour Suicide Prevention Lifeline by dialing 988, or go to your nearest emergency room. For urgent counseling support after hours you may call our office at (760) 750-4915 and dial “2” to speak with a trained counselor.

So that your provider can get you help in the case of an emergency and for your safety, the following are important and necessary:

- You must inform your provider of the exact location in which you will consistently be during sessions and inform them if this location changes.
- You must be stationary (e.g., not in a moving car, walking in a public area) in a private location by yourself.
- You must identify on your informed consent form a person who can be contacted if your provider believes your safety is at risk.
- Your provider may need to verify that your emergency contact person is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and/or call 911 or transport you to a hospital if your provider deems necessary. In addition, your provider may require that you create a safe environment at your location during the entire time that you are in treatment. This may mean disposing of all firearms and excess medication from your location.

When receiving telemental health, it is also required that you:

- Only engage in sessions when you are physically in California. Your provider will confirm this each session.
- Engage in sessions only from a private location where you will not be overheard or interrupted.
- Use your own computer or device, or one owned by CSUSM that is not publicly accessible.
- Ensure that the computer or device you use has updated operating and anti-virus software.
- Do not record any sessions, nor will CAPS record your sessions without your written consent.

#### PRIVACY POLICY AND HIPAA

Our privacy policies are also directed by a federal law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). You can access our privacy practices at: <https://www.csusm.edu/shcs/generalinfo/confidential.html>

You have the right to file a complaint with the California Board of Psychology and/or the California Board of Behavioral Sciences if you think that your counselor has acted illegally, irresponsibly, or unprofessionally.

For questions or complaints for the California Board of Psychology, call (916) 547-7720, Toll free (866) 503-7720 or write to: California Board of Psychology, 1625 North Market Street, Suite N-215, Sacramento, CA 95834. Complaints can also be filed online.

For questions or complaints for the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, call (916) 574-7830, or write to: California Board of Behavioral Sciences, 1625 North Market Street, Suite S-200, Sacramento, CA 95834. Complaints can also be filed online.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Your signature below indicates:**

- You have read and fully understand all of the policies and procedures described above.
- You understand that violation of these policies and procedures may result in termination of services.
- You are voluntarily consenting to and authorizing Counseling Services to provide psychological services.

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Client ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_