

## Counseling Services Contract

Welcome to SUNY Broome Counseling Services. This document contains important information about our professional services. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

## Counseling Services

Our personal counselors are licensed mental health professionals. Counseling is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular problems you bring forward. Counseling is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for counseling to be most effective, you need to actively participate and work on things discussed both during sessions and at home.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Since it often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. It often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

At your first appointment, you will be asked to complete some initial paperwork, which requests relevant background information. Counseling sessions are typically 50 minutes in duration, unless previous arrangements have been made for longer sessions. After the intake process, counseling will make the determination if an outside specialty referral might be in the best interest of the student. In cases where long-term counseling, testing, and/or psychiatric services may be needed, the student will be referred to an off-campus resource.

SUNY Broome Counseling Services utilizes a brief solution-focused model of counseling, which means that a student will typically receive 1-5 individual counseling sessions per semester. Although many presenting issues can be addressed within a triage model, some issues are more difficult to overcome, requiring longer-term treatment. We can provide you with a referral to a counselor in the Binghamton area.

## PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY

**Fees:** Counseling services are available to registered students at no extra fee.

You are not eligible to receive on campus counseling if you are not a registered student, or your status as a student changes while already receiving on campus counseling.

**Hours of Operation:** Counseling Services is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Hours are limited during winter break, spring break, and summer sessions.

Appointments are recommended to ensure the availability of a counselor. Appointments can be made in person or over the phone. Clients with less urgent needs are encouraged to make appointments to ensure that they are seen in a timely manner. After-hours and on weekends, students are instructed to contact Public Safety at 607-778-5083 or 911 if an emergency. Public Safety will make contact with Counseling Center staff if necessary.

If you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment, or need to change a scheduled appointment, please give the Counseling staff a 24 hour notice (via email or phone), if possible. If you do not show up for a scheduled appointment 2 times within a semester (no call, no show), you may lose the privilege of using the counseling services for the remainder of that semester. If you commit to weekly sessions on a particular time and day of the week, and do not show up for one of these appointments, it might jeopardize you losing your weekly time. If you are more than 15 minutes late for a scheduled appointment, the counselor reserves the right to use the remaining time of that hour for other duties

## Contacting your Counselor

Counselors are often not immediately available by telephone. The Counseling Services Department is open between 8 am and 5 pm, our secretary answers calls, and can take messages. You can also use campus email, but note that electronic confidentiality cannot be assured. We make every effort to return your call or email on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please leave some times when you will be available. In emergencies, contact

your physician or the Community Psychiatric Emergency Program at 607-762-2458. If your counselor will be unavailable for an extended time, we will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

**Excuses and Withdraws**

Counseling Services staff does not provide letters at the time of an initial consultation and cannot provide documentation regarding a student's mental health without a history of services at SUNY Broome Counseling Services during the specified time period. If necessary, students are encouraged to seek letters of support from professionals directly involved in their care such as past or present psychological/psychiatric providers, or medical health providers.

**Service Limitations**

Broome Community College Counseling Services does NOT accept court mandated counseling orders for our students. Information from a student's counseling file is not intended for the purposes of employment or forensic evaluations. Counselors do not attest to the suitability of a client for a particular position or work environment or make judgments whether the client is a security risk. Counselors do not sign off for emotional support animals or service animals. Counseling Services does not prescribe or monitor psychotropic or any other medications.

**PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

In accordance with the widely accepted principles of clinical practice, all professional and clinical contact with the personal counselors is documented. These records are property on Counseling Services and maintained by the personal counselors. A record is created and maintained for every student who has received an intake assessment or therapy/counseling. They are not a part of your academic records.

**Access to Records**

The counseling Services Department will adhere to a stricter policy than indicated by FERPA regulations. Clients have a limited right to receive the written copy of information contained in their records. Because these are professional records, they can be misrepresented and/or upsetting to untrained readers. When a client requests to see the record, a counselor will review the material with a client. In the event that the client's counselor is no longer employed by Counseling Services, the Chair, VPSA, or designee will review the record with the client. The Client cannot have access to reports provided by other mental health sources, or any additional paperwork contained in his/her record. Under certain circumstances the progress notes can be released to the student at the discretion of the Chair, VPSA or designee.

**Release of Records**

Student must sign releases to authorize any information to be shared with a third party. When the student authorizes the release of records or information to a third party external to SUNY Broome Community College, the information released may be written or verbal and include the client's attendance record and a brief summary of the client's clinical progress. Clinical data and reports from other mental health professionals or agencies cannot be released by Counseling Services. The student must request release of these records from the primary source. Consent to release records requires a statement of purpose for the released information, the identification of the recipient, and the date of expiration of the consent form.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

There are some situations where counselors are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if the counselor believes that a child, elderly person, or disabled person, is being abused, it may require that a report be filed with the appropriate state agency. If a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, Counseling Services may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting police, or seeking hospitalization for the client. If the client threatens to harm himself/herself, the counselor may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. These situations rarely occur and your counselor will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Your signature will be kept on file indication that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_\_\_