

WELCOME TO THE UW COUNSELING CENTER (UWCC)

The purposes of this document are to introduce you to our services, and explain how the law regulating counselors helps you and a counselor work together. Feel free to discuss any of this information with your counselor.

What is counseling?

Counseling is a process through which you learn to resolve concerns, improve your personal skills, and prevent future problems. A wide variety of personal, academic, and career concerns can be discussed in counseling.

During the initial session, a counselor will meet with you to discuss your concerns, develop a plan, and determine if UWCC is the best service to address any continued needs. You may receive individual, couple, or group counseling, or referral to outside providers who can better meet your needs. Your active involvement, both during and between counseling sessions, is needed for growth to occur.

UWCC provides counseling on a short-term basis. Students must be currently enrolled in a matriculated program and have paid the Services and Activities Fee (SAF) to be eligible for services. The number, frequency, and length of sessions varies depending on your goals. You may have a single appointment or a series of appointments. If it is determined that your concerns require longer-term or specialized care, we can refer you to other providers that can offer this type of care. If you are being seen by our Counselor On Duty, these brief crisis sessions focus on urgent concerns. If you are being seen for a one-time appointment, this session will focus upon 1-2 issues and developing a personalized plan for addressing these concerns.

If you have received services from UWCC, and we do not have contact with you for 60 days or more, we will assume that you are no longer interested in services and will close your file. You are welcome to contact us to request services in the future if you are eligible.

What are the risks and benefits of counseling?

Therapy can have risks and benefits. Because therapy often involves discussing unpleasant parts of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, anger, or anxiety. On the other hand, therapy has also been shown to have benefits like solutions to specific problems, better relationships, and feeling less distressed. Your therapist will do the best they can to help you meet your therapy goals, but there are no guarantees as to what you will experience.

Is everything confidential?

The American Psychological Association Code of Ethics and Washington State law consider the personal information you discuss in counseling to be confidential. This means that no record of counseling is made on an academic transcript, and that information regarding your counseling is not released without your written permission, unless otherwise indicated by law as noted below. If you want someone to be informed that you have received services at UWCC, you must sign a specific authorization to disclose information. Electronic records are kept of your appointments.

Information about your contact with UWCC will not be shared with others outside the Counseling Center without your written consent, except:

- As may be needed to protect the safety of yourself and others, as allowed under Washington State law;
- The information involves the abuse or neglect of a child (under 18 years) or vulnerable adult. Counselors are required to report such incidents to authorities;
- You bring charges against your counselor, and/or the Counseling Center;
- We receive a court order for your records.

For some high security employment positions (e.g., government, Peace Corps, etc.), you may be required to release medical information as part of a background check. We will only do so with your written authorization.

Trainees and Recording of Sessions

Doctoral psychology interns provide some of the direct counseling services for our students, and are supervised by licensed mental health professionals. Our psychiatry resident is supervised by a faculty member of the UW Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Psychology interns may request to record your counseling sessions for training purposes within this center only. We will not record your sessions without your knowledge and approval, and will speak with you first to obtain your written permission. If you agree to be recorded, the recordings will be treated with the same strict confidentiality procedures that have been previously explained. Only

the supervisor of a trainee or, occasionally, other staff counselors consulting with the counselor, will review the recording. Recordings are deleted regularly. If you have any questions about our recording policy, please feel free to discuss them with your counselor. Consent to record is not a requirement to receive counseling.

E-mail and Texting Policies

With your permission, we may use e-mail to communicate with you for scheduling purposes, or to facilitate referral or follow-up. Because e-mail is not a secure medium, please refrain from using e-mail to communicate with a counselor about personal matters. Please DO NOT use e-mail to communicate an urgent or crisis message; counselors do not provide counseling via e-mail, and do not typically check e-mail after hours. If you have an urgent concern after hours, you may contact the King County Crisis Line at 866-427-4747.

Also with your permission, we may use text messaging to provide reminders for appointments. You may choose to stop receiving these reminders at any time by notifying the front desk receptionist.

Counselor Information

UWCC is staffed by licensed mental health professionals (psychologists, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists), and doctoral trainees who are supervised by licensed mental health professionals. We provide a broad range of treatment approaches, depending upon the needs of each client. Approaches the counselor may use include cognitive behavioral, solution-focused, interpersonal, emotionally-focused, and other approaches that the counselor and you feel may best meet your needs. Within these approaches, counselors strive to actively incorporate the personal and cultural values and experiences that reflect the diverse identities that each individual brings. You and the counselor will discuss the type of counseling you will receive, the methods that might be used, and the counselor's education, training, and experience. You may also refer to this website for counselor information: <https://wellbeing.uw.edu/unit/counseling-center/>

Client and Counselor Rights and Responsibilities

Mental health professionals are credentialed and monitored by the appropriate board under the Washington State Department of Health. You can and should ask questions if you don't fully understand what the counselor is doing or plans to do.

Clients in psychotherapy have certain rights in addition to confidentiality. You may:

- ask questions about the qualifications and experience of the counselor
- ask questions about anything related to your counseling and expect honest discussion of your concerns
- refuse or discontinue treatment
- request a copy of your file at any time, request correction of any errors, and request for us to send a copy of your file to any other health care provider

As a client, you also have the responsibility to request the provider and treatment modality that best suits your needs; if your needs cannot be met by UWCC, external referrals will be provided. If you have a concern or question about the services you are receiving, we invite you to discuss these with your counselor or with the Director or Associate Director of UWCC, who can be reached by calling the Counseling Center at 206-543-1240.

If you want to discuss Washington State law or talk about a possible complaint, call the Washington State Department of Health at 360-236-4700, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm M-F. Or, you may e-mail them: hsqa.csc@doh.wa.gov

I affirm that I have read this document, and understand my rights and responsibilities as a student receiving services at UWCC. If I have any questions regarding this document or UWCC procedures, I understand that I may speak with a counselor about them at any time. I may receive a copy of this document by asking a UWCC staff member.

Name (printed)

Student ID #

Signature

Date