

## **TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES POLICY STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT**

Welcome to the Tennessee State University Counseling Center. Please take the time to read this information about our services. If you have any questions, please discuss them with the intake counselor **before you consent to receive counseling services.**

### **Confidentiality**

The University Counseling Center adheres to federal and state laws and ethical standards. Information that you share will be within the context of the therapeutic relationship and will remain between the client/student and their counselor/director/supervisor. **Your written permission is required** before any information about your contact with the Counseling Center is released to parents, faculty, staff, etc. or any outside agencies, within legal and ethical boundaries. Each client/student has a right to privacy.

Exceptions to information being released without prior consent are:

- When there is a risk of imminent harm to self;
- When there is a risk of imminent harm or serious threat of harm to another person; When there is a risk of a child or vulnerable adult abuse;
- When information is required by law or has been ordered by the court.

The Counseling Center reserves the right to consult and discuss pertinent information with other counselors and supervisors within the Counseling Center.

### **Eligibility**

All students enrolled full-time or part-time at Tennessee State University are eligible to receive **counseling services at no cost**. A psychiatrist is also available (upon referral from staff) for students. Consultation services with the psychiatrist are also **free of charge**; however, students are responsible for covering the costs for any prescriptions. Services provided by the psychiatrist include medication evaluation and management, diagnosis, and treatment planning. If you are referred off campus to health, mental health, or substance abuse professionals you are responsible for those charges.

### **Intake Appointment**

The first appointment in the University Counseling Center is the intake session, which may last from 30 to 45 minutes. One purpose for this appointment is screening or assessment. You and your counselor will discuss your concerns, background information, contributing factors in your decision to visit the Counseling Center, and your goals for counseling. This visit will clarify whether any student should be referred elsewhere for services. You will usually continue to meet with the counselor who conducts your intake however under some circumstances you may be referred to another staff member, who may meet your needs better.

### **The Counseling Process and Personal Commitment**

Active participation in the therapeutic process is a significant part of counseling being beneficial. You are encouraged to follow through with activities requested by your counselor. When possible, please notify your counselor about missing an appointment.

Counseling by itself may not resolve your problems or concerns. Your counselor will assess your progress on an ongoing basis. If necessary, he or she will discuss alternatives, including possible referral to others. If you have concerns about a lack of improvement, you are encouraged to address these with your counselor. Remaining in counseling is ultimately your choice.

### Number of Visits

The University Counseling Center operates on a short-term counseling model. The number of visits is determined individually for each client depending on his/her concern but is generally not limited.

### Academic Record

Counseling Center records are separate from a student's academic, educational, or job placement files.

### Request for Information

Confidential client records may be released only to a licensed or certified mental health professional (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse, counselor, or social worker) with the client's signed permission. Students who wish to receive a copy of their counseling records must complete an Authorization for Release of Health Information form. You are entitled to receive a copy of these records unless we believe that seeing them could potentially cause harm to you or others. If this is the case we will provide your records to an appropriate mental health professional of your choice, or we will review your records with you and with your consent, we can provide you a summary of your record. A request for a release of records must be processed through the counselor of record, who must review and make decisions about release of files. Office staff cannot make such a release. Please allow two weeks when requesting records for review and preparation. Records will not be released the same day of a request.

### Availability

**The University Counseling Center, located in the Floyd Payne Campus Center-Room 304, is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.** Appointments are scheduled 8:00-12:00 and 1:00-3:45. Additional hours are available on the Avon Williams Campus; please check with a staff member about times. Hours may vary on both campuses during the summer. In the event of a crisis after hours, please call TSU PD at 615.963.5171 or 9-1-1, go to the nearest emergency room or contact Mobile Crisis at 1.855.274.7471 or 615.726.0125. Please note that the hospital emergency room may result in a charge for the student.

### Appointments

Any student currently enrolled at Tennessee State University can call the Counseling Center at 615.963.5611 to make an appointment during normal business hours. Students may also "walk-in." Every reasonable attempt will be made to accommodate students who "walk-in." You may have to wait to speak with a counselor, depending upon availability.

Please call at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to keep your appointment. If you miss a regular appointment and do not call in advance to cancel, it is your responsibility to call and reschedule your appointment or to inform the counselor that you are no longer interested in receiving services. If your counselor is unable to keep an appointment with you, we will attempt to contact you to reschedule. **If you arrive 15 or more minutes late, it may be considered a missed appointment.**

### Communication

Counseling services are not provided through e-mail because it is not considered confidential. Communication through this medium may be used for scheduling but should not be used for counseling purposes.

### Referrals

Counselors may make appropriate referrals within the local community when student needs exceed staff expertise.

**Consultation**

The University Counseling Center staff offers consultation services to faculty and staff at no charge. Your clinician may discuss information about you with other professionals for diagnosis, treatment planning, or clinician supervision. When appropriate, clinicians consult with the center’s psychiatrist or Health Services medical staff as appropriate.

**Telehealth Counseling**

Telehealth counseling is a service delivery method that is provided through a secure platform, Zoom for Healthcare or by telephone, which carries both benefits and limitations to clients. Telehealth counseling is delivered as aligned with legal and ethical guidelines for staff and trainees (practicum and internship students). A prescreening for appropriateness of fit for telehealth counseling will be completed for all clients receiving distance counseling. Additionally, clients who receive telehealth counseling are provided with a client service letter about this delivery method and information about security measures that must be in place. Furthermore, clients who receive telehealth counseling attest to being located within state lines of Tennessee to be eligible. Clients for whom telehealth counseling is not a suitable fit or who are outside of state lines will be connected to local services in their area.

**Supervision and Training**

It is common for professional staff to receive supervision and consultation on a weekly basis. This supervision allows for instruction and supervisory input regarding your situation, ensuring you receive the highest quality of service possible. The supervision process is always conducted by the rules of confidentiality as stated above. Some services at the University Counseling Center are provided by doctoral and master’s level students (or limited externship), counseling staff under supervision in counseling, psychology or a related field. You will be informed by the clinician if your counselor is in one of these categories. If you agree to receive services, your counselor may request your written permission to audio or video record your counseling sessions. These recordings are used for training purposes only as a part of supervision.

*Disclaimer:* The counseling center aims to provide the highest quality of care to students seeking services. Therefore, the staff gathers non-identifying information from services that may be used for reporting, research, and grant purposes. These efforts provide opportunities to support staffing, seek partnerships, or other opportunities that align with the vision, mission, and goals of the counseling center and the university in working with students.

**I have read, and I understand the information regarding the University Counseling Center policies and my responsibilities as a client.**

**I have had the opportunity to discuss any questions I have about the information I have read.**

**I also understand that for counseling to be successful I must work with my counselor; however, the results of counseling may vary.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Student**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Staff Counselor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**