



Health Professions 266  
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## Informed Consent, Rights, Responsibilities, & Authorization

### INFORMED CONSENT and AUTHORIZATION FOR TREATMENT

*This document contains important information about our professional services and policies. Please read it carefully and initial in the box at the bottom of each page indicating that you have both read and understand the information provided. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and the DSC Counseling Center. A copy of this document is also available on the DSC Counseling Center website.*

#### Eligibility for Services:

Dalton State College Counseling Center (DSCCC) services are available to all currently enrolled Dalton State College (DSC) students of 18 years of age or older. DSC faculty/staff, minors, and dual-enrolled students are not eligible for services; however, appropriate referrals and consultation will be provided as resources allow. All other community members, including alumni, will be referred to providers outside of the DSCCC.

#### Scope of Services:

DSCCC services are limited in time and scope and within the training, experience, and availability of clinical staff. If it is determined that the presenting issue of any client falls outside DSCCC's scope of practice, then clients will be informed, and appropriate referrals will be made. Examples of issues which may fall outside of the scope of DSCCC practice include but are not limited to persistent and severe mental illness, history of multiple hospitalizations, court mandated counseling, severe substance abuse, active eating disorders, medication management, and psychological testing. DSCCC does not provide documentation or recommendations for emotional support animals. DSCCC provides referral services either after the initial session or as these factors become more apparent during services. DSCCC clinicians can provide referral options believed to best meet a student's needs, but the decision for ongoing treatment is ultimately the responsibility of the student. A more thorough explanation of scope of services is available on the DSCCC website. Any concerns can be discussed with your intake clinician.

#### What to Expect:

##### *Temporary COVID-19 Precautions (as of 6/2/2021)*

Based on CDC Guidelines, the DSCCC will offer in-person and telehealth counseling services for clients beginning August 9, 2021 and continuing indefinitely. In-person services will be limited to ongoing individual counseling sessions, solution sessions, and emergency sessions unless otherwise approved by clinicians due to special circumstances (i.e., an in-person intake is most appropriate and feasible). All students and staff will be required to wear masks and practice social distancing while inside the counseling center despite vaccination status.

##### *Initial visit:*

After completing initial forms, you will meet with an intake clinician for 20-30 minutes. This clinician will work with you to determine what services/resources would be most beneficial to you. The intake clinician may or may not be the person you meet with on a regular basis if you enter counseling. Furthermore, it may be that the DSCCC is not the best resource for you. In this case, your intake clinician will provide information for locating an outside provider or resource that may be more appropriate and beneficial for you at intake or in follow up consultations.

***On-going sessions:***

The purpose of counseling is to assist you in personal development. A wide variety of concerns may be discussed like depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, and more. Your initial sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs, and a treatment plan will be created to help you address your goals for counseling. Counseling sessions are usually scheduled on a weekly or bi-weekly basis typically lasting 45-50 minutes. Group sessions usually meet on a weekly basis unless otherwise indicated.

Clinicians utilize various modalities, skills, and interventions. Therapy is an opportunity to discuss your problems or issues you may be experiencing. *Clinicians rarely give advice or suggest how to solve a problem.* Your clinician will provide a warm and empathic environment assisting you in processing issues and promoting insight into them. Most clients find only a few sessions are needed to address concerns. If longer term services are needed, your clinician will discuss this with you and may suggest a referral to an outside provider based on the scope and availability of services.

**Benefits and Risks:**

Research has shown that counseling can be beneficial and effective; however, benefits and specific outcomes cannot be guaranteed. Counseling provides an environment to process unpleasant issues. Risks include bringing up challenging feelings to arise inside and outside the counseling setting such as loneliness, sadness, anger, and more. Your clinician will support you through the counseling process and treat you with respect and professionalism.

**Counseling Records:**

Counseling records are kept in a secure and encrypted electronic database. Client records are accessible only to DSCCC staff. DSCCC will be responsible for storing general client records and managing client information related to scheduling appointments. Computerized records are password protected. DSCCC records are not part of DSC student records and are not accessible to other offices. Counseling records are separate from those of the Student Health Center. Records are kept on file for 7 years since the date of last activity. You have the right to request to review your records with your clinician. Relevant information from records will be forwarded to appropriate professionals when a client signs an authorization to release form. Authorizations for release of information may be revoked at any time by notifying a clinician.

**Confidentiality:**

DSCCC adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines set by state and national law and professional ethical codes. All verbal communications are considered confidential. Outside of sessions, communications will be made by phone and/or email (unless otherwise indicated by the client). Appointment reminders may be sent via text message, if desired. Any and all records kept by clinicians relating to clients 18 years of age or older are kept confidential except in these cases:

- a. When the client is determined to be a threat to the health and safety of self or another, including abuse of a child, elder or disabled adult. If a clinician determines a client'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 client, 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 DSCCC professional staff/interns discuss case material for the purpose of consultation, supervision, or treatment team planning.
- d. When DSCCC staff makes a referral on your behalf to Student Health in order to coordinate treatment. Only relevant and pertinent information relating to treatment planning shall be shared, and a signed release form from the client will be required.

- e. When a CARE Report about a client involves threat of harm to self or other(s).
- f. When the client has given consent to share specified information with identified person(s).
- g. Clients under age 18 must have a parent/guardian sign this form before treatment begins. The client, clinician and parent(s) will together identify confidentiality parameters for future treatment.
- h. Client names and appointment information are shared with front office staff for check in and scheduling purposes.

#### **Staff Consultation:**

In order to provide you with the best care, DSCCC clinicians may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. Your clinician may consult with another member of our professional staff concerning the service we provide you. DSCCC clinicians may also consult outside professionals about counseling cases. When consultation outside the DSCCC is sought, our staff do not reveal the identity of the student. If you don't object, our staff will not tell you about these outside consultations unless we feel that it is important for you to know.

#### **Client Rights and Responsibilities:**

- You have a right to confidentiality within the limitations described above.
- 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 client's responsibility to make a good faith effort to fulfill the treatment recommendations suggested by your therapist. These recommendations include efforts such as attending appointments as suggested by your clinician, being actively involved during sessions, completing action plan assignments, following up with a medication evaluation referral, 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 created with your clinician. If you have concerns about treatment suggestions, you are encouraged to express them to your clinician to avoid any misunderstandings.
- 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 necessary, provide appropriate referrals & terminate treatment. (You have the right to be informed of reasons for referral.)
- 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.
- You have the right to refuse treatment and to be involved in determining length and frequency of your treatment.
- You have the right to receive treatment from competent mental health care professionals who respect your individualized needs.
- 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 therapist, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with your therapist or DSCCC Associate Director.
- For clients 18 years of age or older, access to records/treatment information is available only with a written release of information form, signed by the client.
- Cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance by calling DSCCC. It is the client's responsibility to reschedule any missed or cancelled appointments. **Clients who miss without calling to cancel (no show) 3 appointments during a semester may lose eligibility for services for the remainder of that semester. If you are more than 15 minutes late for an appointment, the Center reserves the right to reschedule your appointment, and this will count as a "no show."**
- 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. Dalton State 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. Be advised that Dalton State College & DSCCC will attempt to prevent testimony from occurring.

- For information regarding HB 280 (campus carry) please visit the following website: <http://www.usg.edu/hb280>
- For financial aid appeal, withdrawal, and similar letters, clinicians are discouraged from writing a recommendation, but can provide documentation of number of appointments attended, goals worked toward, and progress achieved.

### **Communication:**

Telemental Health is an evolving practice. In the state of Georgia, all use of technology to communicate and send information to a client is considered Telemental Health regardless of the nature of the communication. All clinicians employed at the DSCCC are required to maintain appropriate knowledge of Telemental Health issues and complete requisite trainings, as needed.

E-mail, mobile phone text messaging/calls and facsimile are not secure media; therefore, confidentiality of e-mail, mobile phone use, and facsimiles cannot be guaranteed. Staff do not maintain 24-hour access to e-mail. **Urgent or emergency communications should not be sent via email or fax since timeliness of response to a facsimile or email message cannot be guaranteed.** 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 clients and former clients will not be accepted. If you and your clinician do choose to communicate via email, those messages will be limited to appointment reminders, following up on cancelled appointments and surveying purposes. Scheduling appointments is only appropriate over the phone (706-272-4430) unless otherwise agreed upon with you therapist. Discussion about counseling session content should be limited to face-to-face communication. If you prefer not to be contacted by email regarding administrative concerns, please indicate that preference.

DSCCC utilizes text-messaging for appointment reminders only.

DSCCC main telephone is generally operated by front office personnel, and clinicians are often not immediately available. In case of emergencies and crisis situations, please call 911 or Public Safety or the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225.

### **Research and Evaluation:**

We periodically evaluate our services in order to improve our services to you. The evaluations you complete are anonymous and confidential. For Center purposes, overall averages are used. Your clinician will receive the evaluation information from his/her clients, but your name will not be provided to the clinician.

Information for an annual report of services is routinely compiled and reported as group averages with no individually identifying information. This is used for program planning and service evaluation as well as to participate in national research.

### **Supervised Staff and Recording Sessions for Training:**

Some of the clinical staff at the DSCCC may be graduate-level interns who are under the direct supervision of a licensed mental health professional. Individuals who are pursuing licensure as mental health professionals are also required to be under supervision. All staff members under supervision are required to disclose their level of training and the name of their clinical supervisor(s) to you.

Recording sessions may be part of the training for supervised clinicians. Supervised staff may request your written permission to record sessions with you. These recordings will be used only for quality assurance and supervision. Recordings will be erased after being reviewed. If you do not want your sessions to be recorded, you are under no obligation to consent to this request.

**Staff & Credentials:**

The DSCCC consists of licensed professional clinicians, licensed clinical social workers, and post-master's degree clinicians. Clinicians without appropriate licensure are required to be supervised by licensed clinicians.

The following clinical staff members are listed with their respective degrees and licenses:

Full-time clinicians:

Nick Deslattes, LCSW

Jenny Guy, LPC

Part-time clinicians:

Julia Flanagan, LPC

**Hours:**

DSCCC normal operating hours are Monday-Thursday 8am-5pm, Friday 8am-12pm during the Fall and Spring Semesters. During academic breaks, the DSCCC may operate on reduced hours for administrative functions. We are closed on Fridays during the Summer semester and holidays for which the college closes. We may also close for inclement weather or other unexpected campus closures.

**Emergency Closures and Crisis Protocol:**

Dalton State College may experience emergency closures due to inclement weather, health concerns, and other significant events. These emergencies often require immediate safety procedures including the closure of specific student services (e.g., counseling services). The DSC Counseling Center has created emergency procedures that prioritize the safety and well-being of students and clients during emergency closures.

All students, faculty, and staff experiencing mental health emergencies are always directed to contact emergency services. Mental health emergencies include suicidal thoughts or plans to end your life, thoughts of harming others, psychotic episodes (e.g., hallucinations, delusions), sexual assault, and more. Emergency services can be accessed on and off-campus using the following contacts and links:

- DSC Public Safety: 706-272-4461
- Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL): 1-800-715-4225
- Tennessee Crisis Phone Line: 1-855-274-7471
- Dial 911

*We hope your experience at the Dalton State College Counseling Center is a positive one. If at any time you have any questions or concerns about your experience, please feel free to contact Jenny Guy, LPC, Counseling Center Associate Director, or Garrett Burgner, Executive Director of Health & Wellness.*

**Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms while you are being seen at the DSC Counseling Center.**

*I hereby agree to and authorize counseling/treatment/assessment/consultation at DSCCC. I have read the information contained in the above "Informed Consent, Rights, and Responsibilities," and I understand and agree to these provisions and policies. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the statements above with a clinician and understand I can access this document on DSCCC website or request a hard copy at any time.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name & Student ID

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature                      Date