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Informed Consent, Rights, and Responsibilities

INFORMED CONSENT 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 students. Dalton State College faculty and staff are not eligible for services; however, appropriate referrals and consultation will be provided as resources allow. Partners of currently enrolled students are only eligible for brief couples counseling. All other community members, including alumni, will be referred to providers outside of the DSCCC.

Scope of Services:

The Dalton State College Counseling Center services are limited to short-term counseling within the training, experience, and availability of clinical staff. If at any time it is determined that the presenting issues of clients fall outside of the scope of practice for DSCCC, appropriate referrals will be made. Examples of issues which may fall outside of the scope of DSCCC practice and are addressed through referral 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, including for emotional support animal documentation. The Counseling Center provides referral services either after the initial session or as these factors become more apparent during the course of services. The Center's counseling staff can provide referral options that we believe will best meet a student's needs, but the decision for ongoing treatment ultimately is the responsibility of the student. A more thorough explanation of scope of services is available on the Counseling Center website and can be discussed with your intake counselor.

What to Expect:

Initial visit:

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

Client Initials: _____

In general:

The purpose of counseling is to assist you in personal development. A wide variety of concerns may be discussed including 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. Counseling sessions typically last 45-50 minutes. You can expect to be treated with respect and professionalism.

Therapists utilize various modalities, skills, and interventions. Therapy is an opportunity to discuss your problems or issues you may be experiencing. *Counselors rarely give advice or suggest how to solve a problem.* Rather, your counselor will provide a warm and empathic environment and assist you in processing issues and reaching better understanding. Most clients find only a few sessions are needed to address concerns. If longer term services are needed, your counselor will discuss this with you and may suggest a referral to an outside provider based on scope and availability of services.

Benefits and Risks:

Research has shown that counseling can be beneficial and effective in helping people deal with emotional, relational, and developmental issues. However, benefits and specific outcomes cannot be guaranteed, and there are some risks involved. Counseling provides an environment to process unpleasant issues, present and past, and may cause negative feelings to arise, which may include loneliness, sadness, anger, and others. Your counselor will support you through the counseling process.

Counseling Records:

Counseling records are kept in a secure electronic database. Client records are accessible only to Counseling Center staff. The Counseling Center will be responsible for storing general client records and managing client information related to scheduling appointments. Computerized records are password protected. Counseling Center 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 counselor. Relevant information from records will be forwarded to appropriate professionals when the client signs an authorization to release form.

Confidentiality:

The Counseling Center adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines set by each professional's national and state ethical codes/guidelines. All conversations, both by telephone and in person, are confidential. Communications will be made by phone and/or email (unless otherwise requested by the client). Any and all records kept by The Counseling Center staff 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 counselor determines a client's personal safety or the safety of another person is at risk, counselors 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, counselors are required by law to notify the appropriate state agency. If any of these situations occur, every effort will be made by your counselor 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.

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- c. When the Counseling Center professional staff/interns discuss case material for the purpose of consultation, supervision, or treatment team planning.
- d. When the Counseling Center 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, counselor 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, DSC Counseling Center staff may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. Your counselor may consult with another member of our professional staff concerning the service we provide you. DSCCC staff may also consult outside professionals about counseling cases. When consultation outside the DSCCC Counseling Center 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 counselor, being actively involved during sessions, completing homework assignments, following up with a medication evaluation referral and 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 recommended by your counselor. If you have concerns about treatment suggestions, you are encouraged to express them to your counselor to avoid any misunderstandings.
- If during the counseling process your counselor determines he/she is not effective in helping you reach your counseling goals, or if long-term or more specialized treatment is warranted, your counselor is obligated to discuss this with you and if necessary, provide appropriate referrals & terminate treatment. (You have the right to be informed of reason 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

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encourage you to discuss your concerns with your therapist or the Counseling Center 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 the Counseling Center. 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 counselor as a witness in a court proceeding. Be aware that once counseling services are initiated, it is unethical for your counselor to give any opinion/recommendation about issues in a legal/court setting such as custody/visitation arrangements or other legal issues, even if your counselor is compelled by a judge to be a witness. Dalton State College counselors are not considered forensic experts in legal matters. If a counselor is required by a judge to testify, counselors are ethically bound not to provide an opinion about a legal matter. Be advised that Dalton State College & the Counseling Center 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 letters, counselors are discouraged from writing a recommendation, but can provide documentation of number of appointments attended, goals worked toward, and progress achieved.

Communication:

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, Pinterest, etc. are **not** appropriate means of communication with your counselor as those media may compromise your confidentiality and privacy and blur the boundaries of the professional counseling relationship. Friend or contact requests sent to counselors by current clients and some former clients will not be accepted. If you and your counselor do choose to communicate via email, those messages should be limited to only administrative purposes, such as cancelling an appointment. 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.

The Counseling Center main telephone is generally operated by front office personnel, and counselors 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 counselor will receive the evaluation information from his/her clients, but your name will not be provided to the counselor.

Information for an annual report of services is routinely compiled and reported as group averages with no

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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 therapists. 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.

Emergencies:

DSCCC normal operating hours are Monday-Thursday 8-4:30, Friday 8-11. During academic breaks, the DSCCC may operate on reduced hours for administrative functions. We are closed during the months of June and July and holidays for which the college closes. We may also close for inclement weather. For after hours, weekends, and holidays, or in the event of an emergency in which you are unable to reach the Counseling Center, call 911, Public Safety (If on campus), the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225, or immediately obtain safe transportation to the nearest hospital emergency room.

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 Charity Muse, MS, LPC, Counseling Center Associate Director, or Dr. Cheryl Owens, Director of Student Health Services.

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 counseling/treatment/assessment/consultation at the Counseling Center. 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 counselor and understand I can access this document on the Counseling Center website or request a hard copy at any time.

Name

Student ID

Signature

Date

Guardian Name

Relationship

Guardian Signature

Date

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Appointment Availability

CROSS OUT all appointment times for which you would be UNAVAILABLE for counseling on a regular basis due to class, work, etc. Please note that the more availability you provide, the more likely it is that your schedule will match the schedule of a DSC Counseling Center counselor.

Name: _____

M	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
T	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
W	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Th	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
F	8:00	9:00	10:00					

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