

RMU Counseling Center Informed Consent

Reference Copy

Services Provided

The RMU Counseling Center offers a variety of individual and group therapy. Counseling has both risks and benefits. The counseling process may include discussions of your personal challenges and difficulties which can elicit uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, and frustration. However, counseling has also been shown to have many benefits. It can often lead to better interpersonal relationships, improved academic performance, solutions to specific problems, and reductions in feelings of distress. But, there is no assurance of these benefits.

Excuses/Accommodations Requests

Counseling center staff do not provide excuses for missed classes and/or coursework, make academic recommendations for course instructors, or provide academic accommodations for students. Supporting documentation for accommodation requests will be provided solely on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of counseling center staff. Requests for documentation materials will be considered for established counseling center clients only. If you believe that you may qualify for reasonable accommodations, you may reach out to Student Accessibility Services (sas@rmu.edu) to begin the application process. Please visit www.rmu.edu/links/sas for more information.

Teletherapy Services

The RMU Counseling Center offers the option of teletherapy (via face-to-face video conferencing) to currently enrolled students who meet the eligibility criteria. Teletherapy sessions are provided at the discretion of the counselor and are offered as appropriate for the individual student.

Refer to the Online & Distance Counseling page of our website at - <https://www.rmu.edu/why-rmu/campus/counseling-center/online-distance> - for details about the teletherapy process, situations in which we would need to involve a collaborator (a person we can contact on your behalf in case of emergency), and student eligibility.

Confidentiality

In keeping with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, the American Counseling Association, and state and federal law, all services provided by the staff of the RMU Counseling Center are kept confidential except as noted below. Going beyond the 5-year state and federal law requirements and current ethical standards, we retain records of your counseling appointments for 7 years from the last contact. Although we no longer provide psychiatry services, psychiatry records for students who formerly received these services are also kept for 7 years from the last contact. These records are stored electronically in an encrypted database. Only RMU Counseling Center staff has access to your records. Neither the fact that you seek counseling nor any information disclosed in counseling sessions will appear in your student record unless you specifically direct us to communicate with other staff and/or faculty at the university.

In rare cases, Counseling Center staff members have a legal responsibility to disclose student information to parents/guardians or designated personnel without prior consent in certain situations. Exceptions to confidentiality may be made in the following circumstances:

- Serious immediate threat to your life or welfare
- Serious immediate threat to the life or welfare of another person or the community at large
- Suspicion or report of abuse or neglect of a child currently under the age of 18, or of a dependent older adult
- When required by a court of law
- Additionally, if your therapist feels that they have been stalked, physically/verbally threatened or harassed by a client, they may, in consultation with the Counseling Center director, notify appropriate campus authorities.

We will follow university protocols for supporting students at risk of imminent harm. Consult with your therapist if you have any questions about confidentiality.

General Counseling Policies

Although we try to arrange initial counseling appointments promptly, a wait list may occur during busy periods of the year. If you consider your situation to be an emergency that will not allow a delay, please inform the staff. For after-hours emergency services:

- if on campus, contact the university police at 412-397-2424
- if off campus, call resolve Crisis Services at 1-888-796-8226 or go to the nearest emergency room

Many issues typically encountered by students can be addressed with the short term counseling we provide. Your initial consultation is devoted to defining your concerns, developing a treatment plan, and determining whether the RMU Counseling Center can meet your needs. In addition to our standard individual counseling offerings, students are now able to participate in a variety of group therapy options as part of their treatment plan. Group therapy can be discussed with your counselor or may be recommended as the primary treatment modality at the conclusion of an initial consultation. If at any point it is determined that services beyond our scope of practice are more suitable, we will help you obtain assistance from appropriate community providers. Non-compliance with the plan we develop to assist you could result in the termination of services.

Attendance Policy

Please arrive on time for your appointments. Arriving more than 15 minutes late is considered a no-show, and your appointment will be rescheduled for another day. Missed appointments (no-shows) reduce our capacity to provide services to other students. Since demand for services is typically high, we ask that you only schedule appointments that you are confident you will keep. We understand, however, that it is sometimes necessary to cancel or reschedule an appointment. It is our firm policy that scheduled appointments must be cancelled at least 24 hours in advance.

If you miss 3 counseling appointments by a no-show, arriving more than 15 minutes late, or cancelling with less than 24 hours' notice ---or any combination of these--- your respective file will be closed and you will be referred to a community provider. You will not be eligible for counseling services for the remainder of the semester.

Note that we may consider extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. However, extenuating circumstances do not include changes in work schedules or other foreseeable conflicts, when given less than 24 hours' notice.

Regardless of your status, you are always eligible for the walk-in crisis services at the RMU Counseling Center.

Client Rights and Responsibilities

RMU Counseling Center clients have a right to be treated with respect, to know their therapist's name and qualifications, to ask questions about services provided to them, to participate in making decisions about their treatment, to request that their therapist inform them of their progress, and to refuse a particular type of treatment or end treatment without any obligation or penalty. Any concerns should be first addressed with your therapist. If your issue is unable to be resolved, you have the right to schedule an appointment to speak to the Counseling Center director. The therapeutic relationship is paramount to success. Clients have the right to request a new therapist if there are any compatibility concerns. A client who requests to see a different therapist will meet with the Counseling Center director to discuss this decision and determine a plan of action.

RMU Counseling Center clients have a responsibility to describe their concerns/issues clearly and completely, to work toward their counseling goals, to attend all appointments unimpaired by the influence of drugs or alcohol, to be on time and keep all appointments for scheduled services at the Counseling Center, and/or to do their best to call or email no less than 24 hours in advance to cancel or reschedule appointments.

I understand that I may request to meet with my clinician's supervisor for any reason I wish and that I have the right to schedule an appointment to speak to the Counseling Center director, Tiffany Guthrie, regarding any problems or grievances. Tiffany can be reached at guthrie@rmu.edu or 412-397-5900.

Use of Electronic Mail

Please be aware that email may not be private or confidential and may not be read by the recipient in a timely fashion. As a result, email communications will be limited to non-clinical issues only (appointment scheduling, etc.).

Treatment by a Supervised Clinician

I understand that my treatment may include appointments with a clinician who is working at the RMU Counseling Center as part of their training, in order to fulfill the requirements of an internship or practicum placement as they are completing their graduate degree in counseling, psychology, or related degree program.

If I am seen by a clinical trainee, I understand that:

- In order to fulfill these requirements, my clinician works under the direct supervision of either:
Tiffany Guthrie, MS, LPC, NCC, ACS - guthrie@rmu.edu

OR

Margaret Spierto, MA, LPC, NCC - spierto@rmu.edu

Both my clinician and their supervisor will follow professional ethics and legal guidelines regarding my privacy and confidentiality and all other aspects of my treatment. I therefore give my clinician permission to discuss any aspect of my counseling and/or psychological services with their supervisor and clinical consultation team.

- I further understand that my clinician is required to create confidential audio recordings of randomly selected sessions for the purpose of ongoing education and supervision. I understand that this is a routine practice in the supervision of staff and interns as part of their supervised training and/or course requirements.
 - **If any of my sessions are selected for recording, I will be consulted in advance before any recording takes place to ensure that my permission has been obtained.**
 - I understand that these recordings are used by my clinician and their supervisor(s), in individual or small group supervisory setting, for the purposes of quality assurance and ongoing review of my clinician's skills. If this recording is to be used in a classroom setting, any identifying information will be deleted or changed to protect my identity. I understand that the recordings will be deleted from the recording device and stored solely on a protected server in encrypted files until such time as they are no longer needed.

I understand that my receiving treatment is not dependent on whether or not I consent to be recorded, and that I can revoke my consent for recording at any time via written request to the Counseling Center.

This copy is for reference only. Your signed Informed Consent will be uploaded and stored with your records in our secured electronic filing system. If you misplace this copy, an electronic copy can be viewed and printed for your records by visiting the RMU Counseling Center website at rmu.edu/counseling. Be sure to select the **Client Forms & Information** box.