

## UCA Counseling Center Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality is an ethical standard that protects clients from the disclosure of information without their consent. Client contacts with the Counseling Center are confidential. We will not provide information about clients to friends, partners, faculty, parents, employers or anyone else outside of the Counseling Center Staff. Information may be exchanged between the UCA Counseling Center, the UCA Student Health Clinic, and the Office of Accessibility and Resource Services without requiring client consent, when those offices are providing services for the same client. For clients seeing Dr. Davis, client consent will not be required when information is requested to and from his off campus office.

The Counseling Center will release information from counseling sessions to third parties only at the request of the client. The "Authorization to Release Professional Information" form, signed by the client and a witness, will be used for that purpose. The client must give informed consent and therefore the counselor will discuss, prior to release, the information to be released, to whom, and for what purpose. The client will also be advised about the possible effects of disclosure.

### Exceptions:

- When the Counseling Center believes that a client poses a clear and present danger of harm to themselves and/or others (verbal threat, action, or possession of a prohibited weapon or prohibited device), the Counseling Center may selectively release information, without the client's consent, to aid in the care and protection of the client or endangered others.
- When the Counseling Center has reasonable cause to suspect that a child (a person under 18 years of age) has been subjected to child maltreatment, which may involve abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation or abandonment as defined by Arkansas Law, the Counseling Center may selectively release information, without the client's consent, to aid in the care and protection of a child. The Counseling Center is further required by Arkansas Law to report this information to the Department of Human Services.
- When the Counseling Center has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult (a person 18 years of age or older) through abuse or neglect, is in imminent risk of death, or bodily harm and does not comprehend the nature and consequence of remaining in that situation or condition, then the Counseling Center is required to report this situation to the Arkansas Department of Human Services.

### E-mail Communication:

E-mail is an important means of communication. However, e-mail is not a secure means to transmit confidential information. Therefore, the Counseling Center will use e-mail to communicate with clients only (a) in response to the client's initiation and (b) with the client's consent to send messages to their e-mail address. Copies of e-mail communication between client and counselor will be scanned into the client's file.

### Client files:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) provides that students records maintained by physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists or other recognized professionals and para-professionals are not educational records. Therefore, client files do not become part of any permanent record at the University, but are the property of the Counseling Center.

Clients may review their records in the presence of a Counseling Center staff member, upon written request. The request and fact that a review occurred will be noted in the client's record. Clients may receive copies of their record unless the Counseling Center, upon review, believes disclosure would be detrimental to the client's health or well-being.

The client file of a person who is not a student, including but not limited to, a staff member, faculty member, student's spouse, etc., is not an educational record.

Client session notes are kept and stored electronically and maintained in the client's file. The entire file including client demographic information and other personal information is maintained electronically in a secured server dedicated to the Counseling Center's needs. Compiled information when retrieved is used for summary report purposes and does not identify clients by name.

### Disclosure of Client Records:

Arkansas law recognizes the privilege that attaches to the counselor-client and psychologist-client relations. The privilege is extended only to licensed counselors and psychologists. Should the Counseling Center receive a subpoena for client records, university legal counsel will be consulted prior to taking any action. Clients will be notified in advance, if at all possible, of any compliance with a court order, state or federal law that might require disclosure of client records.

**Cancellations & Missed Appointments (continued):**

When a client fails to contact the Counseling Center to cancel an appointment, the client is considered to be a “**No Show**”. Please be considerate in scheduling because that appointment time, reserved by the counselor for you, could be used to serve another client.

Clients, including No Shows, who reschedule but do not attend two consecutive sessions may have their files closed for the semester and not be permitted to return to counseling until the next semester. Clients who arrive more than 15 minutes late for their appointment will be seen or rescheduled at the discretion of the counselor.

**Concerns and Complaints:** The Counseling Center staff strives to provide counseling that demonstrates respect for every client, treats all with dignity, and is sensitive to the diversity that is present in those whom we serve. If your counselor does not meet these standards in counseling with you then we encourage you to let us know.

First, you may take your concern directly to your counselor and attempt to resolve the issue/s with your counselor. If that interaction does not result in a satisfactory solution - or you are uncomfortable speaking directly with your counselor about your concern - then request to speak with the Director of the Counseling Center (501-450-3138; Student Health Center, Suite 327). The Director will arrange a meeting with you to review the issue/s and attempt to find a suitable resolution.

If the Director of the Counseling Center is your counselor and your complaint is about them, you may contact the Vice President for Student Affairs (501-450-3416; Student Health Center, Suite 210). The Vice President will arrange a meeting with you to review the issue/s and attempt to find a suitable resolution.

A detailed description of the intake procedure can be found on our website at [www.uca.edu/counseling](http://www.uca.edu/counseling).