

Notice of Privacy Practices/Informed Consent

Eastern Illinois University Counseling Center

Effective Date: August 25, 2003

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Confidentiality: How Your Privacy Is Protected

Counseling is confidential. We will use and protect your information in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code, and the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act.

Counseling records are kept separate from academic, disciplinary, and medical records to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. Further, all Counseling Center staff and computer support technicians sign a binding confidentiality agreement that prohibits the unauthorized release of client information. To further protect your confidentiality, Counseling Center staff members do not acknowledge that they are familiar with clients while outside the Center, unless the client acknowledges the staff member first. Additionally, staff will not respond to email messages from clients, because e-mail is not considered a confidential means of communication. Please call if you need to leave a message for your counselor.

Information obtained during counseling sessions will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Center without your knowledge and written consent. If you sign a written authorization allowing us to disclose information, you can later cancel your authorization in writing, and we will not disclose any further information after we receive your cancellation.

The only exceptions to these strict confidentiality rules are rare instances where psychologists and counselors are required to reveal particular information by federal, state, or local laws. Such exceptions include when:

- We believe that a client presents a clear, imminent risk of serious physical or mental injury or death to her/himself or another person unless protective measures are taken.
- We have reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected or a vulnerable elderly individual is being subject to abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.
- We receive a valid court order signed by a judge.
- We are approached by authorized federal officials for information related to national security and intelligence activities.
- We need to seek legal advice from Eastern's University Counsel.

Training/Supervision:

To provide you with the best possible care, your counselor may consult with or receive supervision from another member of our clinical staff. Additionally, some services are provided by graduate level interns who are carefully selected by the Center as trainees. Interns record sessions for case review and training purposes only. The tapes never leave the Center and are immediately erased after the Intern and her/his Supervisor have the opportunity to review the case. Taping will only be done with your consent. Taped material is treated with the same regard for confidentiality as is other client information.

Research:

The Counseling Center collects client information for our own internal planning, quality assurance, and accreditation efforts and to educate the University's faculty and staff about the issues and needs confronting Eastern's students. All data is presented in group form, and to maintain confidentiality, no information about individual students is provided.

As A Client, You Have The Right To:

- Request and provide written authorization to release information. You have the right to revoke your authorization in writing at any time.
- Review your file with your counselor and to request a treatment summary.
- Request that your counselor amend any information in your file that you believe is incorrect or incomplete. Your request must be in writing and must explain the reason(s) for the amendment. We will consider your request, but we are not legally required to amend your record if we believe it is accurate and complete. In that case, you may respond with a written statement of disagreement and ask that the statement be included with your record.
- Request communications from our office be delivered via alternative means or at alternative locations. E-mail is not a permissible means of communication due to concerns about the confidentiality of electronic transmissions.
- Request an accounting of disclosures of information made about you. Other than the exceptions previously outlined, no disclosures will be made about you without your written consent.
- Obtain an additional copy of our Privacy Practices at any time during treatment.

The Counseling Center Has The Responsibility To:

- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the information you share with us. We will not use or disclose your protected information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.
- Abide by the terms of this notice for as long as it is in effect. We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected information we maintain. Should our information practices change, we will create and post a revised notice.
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction.
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate information by alternative means or at alternative locations. Email is not a permissible means of communication due to concerns about the confidentiality of electronic transmissions.

Questions or Complaints:

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights or disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact the Director of the Counseling Center at (217) 581-3413 and/or the University Privacy Officer at (217) 581-7105. All complaints must be submitted in writing. If you file a complaint, we will not take action against you or change our treatment of you in any way.