

Guide to Services and Informed Consent for Counseling Services

Welcome to the Grinnell Student Health and Wellness Center (“SHAW”). This document summarizes important information that you should know about our services. You are welcome to discuss this further with your counselor and ask them to answer any questions you have about our services.

Counseling Services:

The experience of counseling varies depending on the counselor, the client, and the particular concerns that the client brings. There are a number of different approaches that may be used to address your concerns. In general, the process involves you speaking about your issues openly and honestly while your counselor listens, asks you questions, and works with you to address your concerns. You should expect to be able to discuss with your counselor any issues you have, whether about the concerns you bring or about the process of counseling itself. Our goal is to provide access to counseling services to help students succeed academically, personally, and interpersonally.

Our counseling staff includes licensed psychologists, licensed mental health counselors, licensed independent social workers, therapists pursuing license and under the supervision of a licensed staff therapist, as well as graduate level trainees under the supervision of a licensed mental health provider. SHAW utilizes a “multi-track model,” which includes the following services:

- Self-help – e.g. Recommendations for mobile apps/readings/online relaxation exercises
- Workshops - e.g. Mindfulness, Managing Emotions and Relationships
- Brief Counseling – For students wanting only 1-2 sessions with a therapist
- Crisis Management – For students in distress and/or experiencing a mental health crisis
- Group Therapy – For specific topics, general processing, and building social support
- Short-term Individual Counseling – For students seeking counseling on-campus and whose presenting concern falls within our scope of care (see below)
- Transition of Care Services - For students who prefer to be seen by a counselor off-campus and/or whose presenting concern is beyond our scope of care (see below)



Benefits and Risks of Counseling:

Counseling involves benefits and risks. For many people, counseling can improve mood and other symptoms, help with resolving dilemmas, and foster personal growth. While the results cannot be guaranteed, most people benefit from counseling, particularly when the client and counselor collaborate and communicate clearly regarding goals for counseling. Counseling usually results in some degree of personal change. This process of change can sometimes stir up painful memories, create uncomfortable feelings, and/or add stress to relationships. You may or may not experience these kinds of normal reactions as part of your counseling process. Such reactions generally remit as you make progress toward your goals for counseling.

Your First Appointment:

Unless you are attending a crisis/walk-in session, your first appointment will be completing our general consultation/intake process. During this appointment, you and the counselor will review your presenting concerns and scores on our screening measures, as well as discuss your symptoms and relevant history. You'll be encouraged to ask questions, make suggestions, and collaborate with us in your care. Together, you and the counselor will decide on a treatment plan, which includes discussing which of the above track(s) of services might best meet your needs. Please understand that the staff person you meet with during the intake process may or may not be your assigned counselor. You have the right to request a different counselor at any time during the counseling process, and we will do our best to meet this request. If you're being seen for a crisis/walk-in session, please understand that you'll likely need to complete our general intake process on a future date if you wish to schedule additional sessions.

Scope of Care:

SHAW provides brief, strengths-based psychological support and crisis intervention to address the emotional and psychological needs of College students. Though our staff has various interests in working with different concerns, we're generalists in our practice and do not provide specialty care. Students wanting to meet with a specialist can be provided with appropriate referrals to providers in the community and surrounding areas.



In addition, SHAW does not provide services that are considered long-term. Examples of long-term counseling include (but not limited to) intensive outpatient services, therapy that requires multiple sessions per week, counseling without defined and measurable goals, and treatment that requires repeated assessments for risk to self or others. Your individual circumstances and concerns will guide any recommendations made on whether your needs can be addressed appropriately through short-term counseling. Referrals to other practitioners / agencies may be made for concerns that require long-term care. These referrals may be made following the initial consultation, after counseling at SHAW is completed, or at any time during the course of counseling.

Telehealth/Online Counseling

Our commitment to serving you in the most inclusive and ethical manner remains unchanged. Given the evolving nature of the current pandemic, there may be some policies and procedures that are not exactly consistent with what is outlined in our standard consent form, and might evolve at a rapid pace. SHAW is taking, and will continue to take, steps to ensure that the services we provide are with your, your provider's, and the larger community's health and safety as the priorities. This may include SHAW shifting to only phone and/or video-based services. There are currently state and federal limits to these methods of service, but please know we are working to ethically provide as expansive of services as we can (which now included your ability to access the Virtual Care Group). Additionally, we plan to offer some video-based services on a more permanent basis, so the below information is applicable to those voluntary virtual services as well.

If you engage in a virtual appointment we encourage you to find a confidential space for that appointment. Given that we are not able to control your physical environment during virtual appointments we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality for these appointments. This is why it is important that you identify private spaces that will allow you to participate fully in your appointment without others being able to overhear your conversation. Your counselor may ask you to confirm you are in a confidential space, and we ask that should your space not be private (either from the outset or due to someone entering the space part way through your session) we ask that you immediately alert your counselor so you can collaboratively decide how to proceed to protect your confidentiality.

Please be aware that given that in these appointments we are not with you in person, if we learn of potential risk of harm to you or someone else, we will of course discuss this with you, but if we cannot arrive at a clear plan to protect the safety of you and others, or should our call be disconnected before said plan is established, we may reach out to resources in your area (likely emergency resources) in order for them to perform a welfare check on you/others.



Please also be aware that technological difficulties are always a possibility and may lead to a session abruptly ending or being canceled. Please discuss with your counselor how you would like to proceed in such events. (As noted above, if there is any indication of risk, counselors will try to reestablish connection, but if not possible they may engage others to perform a welfare check.)

If you have any questions please speak with your provider before continuing with any phone or video-based service. If you choose to engage with your provider we will take that to mean you have consented to this information and form of treatment and to the potentially changing nature of said treatment.

Additionally, should our services abruptly stop, please know we will close your file in our electronic medical record, and when services become available again you are welcome to reach out to explore options at that time. For your reference, the following are resources available to you, regardless of your location within the United States.

If you or anyone else is in imminent danger or risk of harm please call 911 immediately.

- If you are a Grinnell College student, you can call "Need a Nurse" (a 24/7 After Hours Nursing Hotline): 641-269-3230, press 2
- If you are a Grinnell College student, you can call "Need to Talk?" (a 24/7 Counseling Hotline): 641-269-4404
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24/7, Free, Confidential): 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line (24/7, Free Service with Crisis Counselor): Text HOME to 741741
- National Sexual Assault Hotline (24/7, Free, Confidential): 1-800-656-4673
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): online chat at hotline.rainn.org/online
- The Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990

Integration with the Health Center and Wellness/Mental Health Promotion

Student Health and Wellness in an integrated center consisting of counseling, primary care/nursing, and wellness/mental health promotion. To facilitate good health care, we use the same medical record system as the Health Center and may share relevant treatment information with the professional staff in the Health Center. The Health Center also offers tele-services for medication management, and you and your assigned counselor can decide if a referral to this service is indicated for your concerns. Students can utilize both the tele-services of medication management and counseling at SHAW if warranted. Members of the Wellness/Mental Health Promotion staff are not health care providers, and do not have access to our records. However, they work out of SHAW



and may see you in the waiting room and assume that you're a client. In addition, SHAW utilizes College students as employees and peer educators. None of these students have access to our records, but they may also see you in the waiting room and assume that you are a client. All staff members of SHAW, including our front office, have or will training about protecting your privacy and agree to not release any identifying information outside of their work with SHAW.

Eligibility for Counseling Services:

Our services are covered by student tuition fees at no additional cost to students. Thus, you must be an enrolled student at the College to seek our services. We do not provide services to benefits-eligible employees of the college. We also do not treat families, friends, or peers of students who are not enrolled students at the College. Sometimes, with your permission, non-enrolled students may accompany you to session for support or consultation (e.g. a parent); however, you will remain the identified client, and these types of sessions usually occur only 1-2 times, if at all. In addition, we do not provide services for court-ordered therapy, nor do we provide assessments of disability accommodations. We can provide referrals to community providers for students seeking court-ordered therapy or assessments for disability accommodations.

No-Show Policy:

To meet the needs of as many students as possible, we request that students make every effort to attend scheduled appointments or cancel at least 24 hours in advance so the time may be used by other students. A cancellation less than 24 hours in advance is considered a "no-show." In addition, arriving more than 15 minutes past the scheduled appointment time is also considered a "no-show." A client who displays a pattern of "no-shows," including for two consecutive appointments, may become ineligible for care at SHAW. In such circumstances, the client may be referred to a community provider to continue their care. Clients with a pattern of frequently rescheduling appointments also may become ineligible for care at SHAW and may be given off-campus referrals. In addition, we will treat our care for you as terminated and your file may be closed if we do not have any contact with you for 30 days.

Appointments:



During the academic year, SHAW is open Monday through Friday from 8AM to 5PM, and counseling appointments are typically scheduled from 9:00AM to 4:00PM. Counseling appointments can be scheduled by calling our main office at (641) 269-3230. Please be advised that students who repeatedly present for crisis/walk-in appointments may be referred to a community provider as long-term care is likely warranted. We are closed on official holidays recognized by the College and other College closings.

After-Hours Emergencies:

Emergencies are urgent issues requiring immediate action and usually involve an imminent threat to self or others. If you experience an after-hours emergency, please call 911 or Campus Safety at (641) 269-4600. Calling Campus Safety does not constitute a confidential call, and College officials will be aware that you made this call. Anonymous crisis services can be reached by calling the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-723-8255. The College also has a confidential 24/7 counseling hotline (Need to Talk?) for College students to speak with a counselor by phone at 641-269-4404. The limits of confidentiality, as stated below, do apply when contacting the Grinnell College 24/7 counseling hotline.

Professional Records:

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep counseling information about you in your clinical record (Electronic Medical Record). Your clinical record is not a part of your academic record, and we require the use of a Consent to Release/Exchange Information Form to the extent you desire to have your information disclosed to a third party.

You have the right to have access to your treatment records. Because these records contain information that can be misinterpreted by someone who is not a mental health professional, we typically offer you the opportunity to have your counselor review your records with you before being released to a third party. If your counselor is no longer at SHAW when you request your records, one of SHAW's lead administrators can meet with you.

Confidentiality and Privacy of Your Health Records:



As stated, the Student Health and Wellness Center maintains your counseling information separately from all other Grinnell College records. Except as permitted by applicable law or described in this document, we will not disclose information about you or your health care to persons outside of our Center without your permission.

Medical and counseling services share the same administrative oversight, waiting room, and electronic health record system. The shared electronic health record allows all medical and counseling staff to share information and coordinate your care. To protect your privacy, we follow a "need to know" guideline. This means that providers may review your records if they are providing you with care (or overseeing such care) that requires such access. We operate as an interdisciplinary team, so that you may benefit from a whole-health approach to your care.

To assess the quality of and meet the demand for services, the College from time to time analyzes statistical and demographic information regarding the use of health services on campus. This information will not include your clinical record and it will not include access to the notes taken regarding your counseling sessions. Such analysis occurs only in compliance with applicable federal and state privacy laws. In addition, some staff at the Center give presentations to local/regional/national conferences and speak about our clinical service model. None of these presentations will disclose any personally identifiable health information.

Limits to Confidentiality:

Student Health and Wellness adheres to federal and state law and ethical standards which require that all client information be held in confidence. No confidential information may be released outside the Center without the written consent of the client unless one of the following conditions occur:

1. There is a risk of imminent harm to the student or others. Furthermore, in the event that there are concerns about potential risks to self or others, we reserve the right to contact College officials, such as a Dean of Students or Campus Safety to respond to such concern.
2. The clinician has reason to believe that a child, elderly, or handicapped person is in danger of or is being abused or neglected.



3. The counselor has been served with a court-ordered subpoena to release information. In such a case, we will work with you to try to limit the release of information to only that which is necessary.
4. Other situations provided under federal or state law including, but not limited to, the situation when there is reason to suspect that the client has been the victim of sexual exploitation by a former mental health provider during the course of treatment.



Referrals from other Campus Departments:

If you are being referred to counseling by any other department on campus, it is our standard operating procedure to ask that you sign a Consent to Release/Exchange Information Form, giving us permission to speak with persons in this department and provide updates on your counseling progress. It is your right to decline this request, and you are not obligated by SHAW to sign a Consent to Release/Exchange Information Form in any way. Please be advised that the campus department is most likely aware of our standard operating procedure and might ask you about signing this Consent to Release/Exchange Information Form. Other third parties who are not on campus may not be familiar with our standard operating policy.

Training of Advanced Graduate Students:

The College works with the University of Iowa by utilizing advanced graduate students training to become mental health professionals and may employ counselors who are not yet licensed. Graduate students and unlicensed employees are always under the supervision of a licensed professional. This supervision includes reviewing treatment plans and treatment progress as well as signing off on all notes and other documents that go into your clinical record. You have the right to know the name of the supervisor and how to contact this person. The staff members with whom you meet will provide you with this information prior to the start of counseling. Because of the training mission, the staff member you meet with may ask your permission to record sessions for confidential supervisory and training purposes. You have the right to decline this request as well as request that your counselor be a licensed staff therapist. The benefits to seeing a graduate level trainee who is under supervision of another licensed therapist can be discussed during the initial session.

Email:

SHAW is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care and protecting the privacy of your information. Email is not considered a confidential form of communication. For these reasons, we will not use email to communicate with you outside of the scope of general non-medical/clinical questions and for scheduling.



Minors:

If you are under 18 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your caregiver/legal guardian the right to examine your treatment records and to give their consent prior to you instigating treatment. If you are a minor in distress, we can meet with you for a crisis/walk-in session and establish a safety plan. However, we'll need to inform one or both of your parents or other legal guardian that you attended counseling prior to scheduling additional sessions, and they may learn about the details of the walk-in session. Before contacting one or both of your parents or other guardian, we can discuss the matter with you, if possible, and try to address any objections you may have with what we are prepared to discuss.

Rights and Responsibilities:

1. You have the right to receive consultation and access to counseling services in a timely manner. Your corresponding responsibility is to be proactive about disclosing the full extent of your symptoms, contacting SHAW if your symptoms persist or increase during counseling, and to follow our no-show and rescheduling policy as stated above.
2. You have the right to be fully informed regarding your health and mental health care. Your corresponding responsibility is to be honest and accurate in communication with staff, to ask questions, and to be an active collaborator in exploring and implementing treatment recommendations. You're also responsible for following through on treatment recommendations or for letting your counselor know why you are unable or unwilling to do so.
3. You have the right to refuse any recommended treatment and to request a second opinion. Your corresponding responsibility is to communicate with your counselor regarding your reactions to treatment and to treatment recommendations.
4. You have the right to confidentiality as described in this Informed Consent for Counseling Services. Your corresponding responsibility is to understand the limits to confidentiality and to ask questions if you do not. In addition, it is your responsibility to respect the confidentiality of any student that you might see or interact with which at SHAW. Failure to respect the confidentiality of other students could result in discontinuation of care at SHAW.



Ethics Codes and Guidelines:

SHAW does not discriminate based on age, gender identity, sex, race, creed, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, genetic information, or ability status.

SHAW staff seek to uphold legal, ethical, and institutional requirements. Our focus is on the value and dignity of each student, and our dedication to facilitating a thriving campus community.

By signing below, I indicate that I have read and understand this Informed Consent for Counseling Service. I consent to receive counseling services at the Grinnell Student Health and Wellness Center and understand that there are both risks and benefits associated with counseling. I understand that I have the right to request a copy of this document.

Student's Signature

Date

Printed Student Name

