

**Informed Consent for Hybrid Services**

**1. Services.** Counseling is a conversation or series of conversations between you and a trained professional, who may be a psychologist, a social worker, a counselor or a trainee. A trainee is an advanced graduate student or recent graduate who is in the process of being trained as a professional so they can obtain their professional licensure. The conversations between you and the professional are intended to help you clarify confusing issues in your life, or to help you manage difficult relationships, or to help you find ways to lessen emotional distress. These conversations may occur in-person at NAU CS or via Telehealth. (See Addendums A and B for more information specific to these services)

If more than an initial brief assessment is recommended, the frequency and number of sessions, goals, and type of counseling (e.g., individual, group, relationship counseling and/or an off-campus referral) will be determined by you and your counselor within the limits of our center's resources and within our professional staff's clinical expertise.

Group counseling brings people with common therapeutic goals together. CS groups are professionally led and are typically 90-minute weekly meetings for approximately 10 weeks of the semester. Groups address a range of topics, including relationship concerns, stress management, substance use, depression, anxiety, family distress, and personal growth, to name a few. It may be that your intake counselor determines group is the best treatment option for you.

Case management entails meeting with a social worker who is skilled at assessing needs and connecting you to appropriate resources. During a case management appointment people often share concerns surrounding mental health, financial wellbeing, food insecurities, educational difficulties, and thoughts on what they feel would be most helpful to their situation. It is the case manager's goal to help you navigate and connect with helpful resources; this often translates to calling targeted agencies/individuals together while in session. With your verbal permission, the case manager may communicate with other agencies/departments/individuals after your session to assist in connecting you to mutually agreed upon supports.

**2. Confidentiality.** What you say during counseling is confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone without your permission. Notes from meetings - along with any related items such as correspondence, assessments, or referral information - will also be kept secure and confidential and will not be shared with anyone without your permission.

There are, however, some exceptions to confidentiality. Mental health professionals are required by law, and by their professional ethics, to breach confidentiality if any of the following situations arise: (a) If a counselor believes that someone is seriously considering and likely to attempt suicide; (b) if a counselor believes that someone intends to assault/murder another person; (c) if a counselor believes someone is engaging or intends to engage in behavior which will expose another person to a potentially life-threatening communicable disease; (d) if a counselor suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a minor or of an incapacitated adult; (e) if a counselor believes that someone's mental condition leaves the person gravely disabled; (f) if ordered by the courts.

In rare cases, such as a hospitalization, it may be necessary to let others in the University system know you are in crisis in order to coordinate services for you and/or to minimize the negative impact the crisis might have on you and others in the community. We therefore may notify Residence Life, The Office of the Dean of Students, NAU Police, and/or Medical Services with only minimal and pertinent information. We may also notify family members and/or other appropriate persons if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of you or other persons.

**3. Integrated care.** Another exception to confidentiality involves our integrated approach to health and well-being at CS. Supervision: All trainees and unlicensed staff counselors receive regular supervision from a licensed professional at this center who will be reviewing the progress of your counselor's work with you. Digital Recording: Counselors and trainees may electronically record their counseling work for training purposes and to assure quality service. If your counselor's work will be recorded, they will explain

such procedures to you and request your written informed consent in advance. Consultation: (a) To ensure the quality of comprehensive services, counselors may consult with health service providers at Campus Health Services-Medical Services. (b) Counseling Services is part of Campus Health Services, which also includes Medical Services. On a regular basis, the counseling staff meets with staff from Medical Services to coordinate treatment. (c) The Director of Disability Resources (DR) at NAU often consults with CS regarding students. On a regular basis, the counseling staff meets with the Director of DR to coordinate treatment of clients. Shared information: CS and Medical Services share an electronic health record system and, when treatment reasons arise, consult with each other through secured messages and through shared secured chart notes.

Confidential information about the characteristics of the students who utilize CS and the services students have received is maintained in a secure, electronic database. This information is gathered for the purposes of program evaluation, and, in selected situations, research studies. Research results are provided only in summarized form and will not identify individual clients.

**4. Cost and Eligibility for services.** Information regarding costs and eligibility are available on the center website, as part of the brief intake assessment, and at Patient Services.

**5. After-hours support.** Individuals experiencing a psychological emergency after-hours (evenings, weekends, holidays) may contact the Counseling Services on-call provider for support and safety planning by calling 928-523-2261.

**6. Referral to Disability Resources.** Individuals struggle with many different concerns. Sometimes these concerns indicate a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Please feel free to discuss with your counselor or case manager whether your concerns might constitute a disability and whether you might want to talk with a coordinator in Disability Resources at NAU (phone: 928-523-8773). Please note: Counseling Services staff members do not write letters of support for assistance animals at the request of a client/student.

**7. Providing feedback to your counselor.** In addition to the anonymous surveys CS conducts each year, you are encouraged to communicate with your counselor or case manager about what is helping and what is not. This feedback can increase the effectiveness of counseling as well as your overall satisfaction with the process and outcomes. Should you decide that you would like to switch to a different counselor at Counseling Services, you will be encouraged to speak directly to your current provider about this decision. If you are not comfortable with this, you will be asked to speak to either the CS Director or CS Clinical Coordinator before being permitted to switch counselors. If you have any concerns regarding your client rights, please contact Julie Ryan, Associate Vice President for Health Services, phone 928-523-6343 or Julie.Ryan@nau.edu.

**Please note:** E-mail is not a confidential form of communication with Counseling Services or with your counselor and staff members do not check e-mail after-hours or on weekends. If an emergency arises, please use the telephone to contact us at 928-523-2261; this CS office number provides access to emergency services during and after office hours.

## **Addendum A**

### **IN-PERSON SERVICES DURING COVID-19**

This addendum contains important information about NAU's decision to resume in-person services in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis. Please read this carefully and let your provider know if you have any questions. Your signature indicates that you are aware of the risks associated with in-person services and you agree to follow all Campus Health Services/Counseling Services safety precautions.

### **NAU's Commitment to Minimize Exposure**

NAU's CS has taken steps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 within the office and has posted details related to these efforts on our website and in the office. Please let your counselor know if you have questions about these efforts.

### **Decision to Meet Face-to-Face**

You have agreed to meet in person for some, or all, future sessions. However, if there is a resurgence of the pandemic or if other health concerns arise, it may be required that your appointments are provided via telehealth. If you have concerns about meeting through telehealth, you will talk to your counselor about it first and try to address any issues. You understand that, if your counselor believes it is necessary, they may determine that a return to telehealth is required for everyone's safety. If you should decide at any time that you would feel safer staying with telehealth services, your decision will be honored, as long as it is feasible and clinically appropriate.

### **Risks of Opting for In-Person Services**

You understand that by coming to NAU's CS, and by engaging in a service that requires you to spend approximately 45-50 min in an enclosed room, you are assuming the risk of exposure to COVID-19 (or other public health risk). This risk may increase if you travel by public transportation, cab, or ridesharing service.

### **Your Responsibility to Minimize Your Exposure**

To obtain services in person, you agree to take certain precautions, which will help keep all of us safer from exposure, sickness and possible death. If you do not adhere to these safeguards, your counselor reserves the right to shift to a telehealth arrangement. **Signing this informed consent indicates that you understand and will adhere to the following actions:**

- You will only keep your in-person appointment if you have no symptoms associated with COVID-19 and you have not tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days.
- Campus Health Services/Counseling Services personnel will screen you for COVID symptoms upon entering the front vestibule. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, CS will cancel your appointment at no charge to you or proceed using telehealth.
- You will not enter Campus Health Services/Counseling Services more than 5 minutes before the start of your appointment, unless you have been instructed to arrive early for paperwork completion.
- You will adhere to the safe distancing precautions set up in the waiting room. For example, you will not move chairs or sit where signs have been placed asking you not to sit.
- You will wear a mask in all areas of the building until you reach your counselor's office. At that time, you and your counselor will discuss whether either of you feels more comfortable keeping your masks on or off during your appointment.
- You will keep a distance of 6 feet from your counselor and other CS staff/clients whenever possible, and there will be no physical contact (e.g. no shaking hands, hugs) between you and CS staff.
- If you have a job that exposes you to other people who are infected, you will immediately let your counselor know.
- If someone you live with tests positive for COVID or is demonstrating related symptoms, you will immediately let your counselor know and CS will then shift to counseling via telehealth.

CS may change the above precautions if additional local, state, or federal orders or guidelines are published. If there is a resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic or if other health concerns arise, NAU may require that counseling appointments be conducted via telehealth as appropriate. If you have concerns about meeting through telehealth, you can discuss these concerns with your counselor, who will assist you with community referral recommendations as appropriate.

### **If You or Your Counselor are Sick**

If you present for an appointment and staff have reason to believe that you have a fever or other symptoms, or believe you have been exposed, you will be asked to leave the office immediately. You will be given the option of rescheduling or following up with services by telehealth as appropriate. Should you be exposed, resources can be found on our website. If a CS staff member that you had contact with tests positive for COVID-19, you will be notified immediately so that you can take appropriate precautions and/or seek out testing.

### **Your Confidentiality in the Case of Infection**

If you or others with you in the CS waiting room have tested positive for COVID-19, CS may be required to notify local health authorities that you have been in the office for contact tracing purposes. If this report is necessary, CS will only provide the minimum required information, and will not go into any detail about the reason for your visits. By signing this form, you are agreeing that CS may do so without an additional signed release.

### **Telehealth Appointments**

If CS decides at any time that your in-person services should be suspended for safety purposes, CS can provide secure Zoom video conferencing telehealth services. See the below addendum for more information.

\*Please note: Counseling Services is a scent-free environment. Please refrain from wearing heavily scented perfumes, colognes, lotions, etc., when attending your appointment.

### **Addendum B**

#### **TELEHEALTH SERVICES**

Telemental health (TMH) refers to counseling appointments that occur via phone or videoconference using a variety of technologies. TMH is being offered to improve access to counseling services for students who may not have access to services at the center or may reside outside of Flagstaff and one of NAU's statewide campuses or online learning programs. Though TMH has been shown to be beneficial for many individuals, it may not be appropriate, or the best choice of service for reasons including, but not limited to: chronic risk of harm to oneself or others, chronic suicidal ideation, lack of access to, or difficulty with, communications technology, significant communications service disruptions, or need for more intensive services. In these cases, your counselor will help connect you with referrals to more appropriate services.

TMH services are conducted and documented in a confidential manner according to applicable laws in similar ways as in-person services using HIPAA compliant technology. There are, however, additional risks, including:

- Disrupted, delayed, or communications distorted due to technical failures.
- TMH involves alternative forms of communication that may reduce visual and auditory cues and increase the likelihood of misunderstanding one another.
- Your counselor may determine TMH is not an appropriate treatment option or stop TMH treatment at any time if your condition changes or TMH presents barriers to treatment.
- In rare cases security protocols could fail and your confidential information could be accessed by unauthorized persons.

NAU works to ensure confidentiality and security with the following policies:

- You and your counselor will engage in appointments only from a private location where you will not be overheard or interrupted.

- You may only engage in appointments when you are physically in Arizona. Your counselor will confirm this each meeting.
- You will use your own computer or device, or one owned by NAU but that is not publicly accessible.
- You will not record any appointments, nor will NAU record your appointments, without your written consent.
- You will provide contact information for at least one emergency contact in your location who NAU Counseling Services may contact if you are in crisis and/or if your counselor is unable to reach you.

Should there be technical problems with video conferencing, the most reliable backup plan is contact by phone. Please ensure your counselor has the best phone number to reach you in case of disconnection. If you are unable to connect, or get disconnected, please try to connect again, and if problems continue, call NAU’s Counseling Services.

Please do not use standard email as means of communication as it is not confidential. Sending a Secure Message through the NAU Campus Health Services patient portal is the recommended means of communication if the information is non-urgent. If the information is urgent, please contact Counseling Services at 928-523-2261. **If you are in crisis, please call 911 or contact your local hospital.**

**Face-to-Face crisis services available:**

**Flagstaff**

Flagstaff Medical Center  
1200 N Beaver St Flagstaff, AZ  
928 773 2113

The Guidance Center

2187 N Vickey St, Flagstaff, AZ  
928 527 1899

**State Wide**

Solari Crisis and Human Services/Terros  
Northern AZ, (877) 756-4090

Solari Crisis and Human Services/Terros  
Central AZ, (602) 222-9444

**I have read and understand the information presented in this consent form. If there is anything that concerns me or that I do not understand, I will seek clarification from my counselor or case manager.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent or guardian (if student is under age 18) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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