



Continuing Session



UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
**COUSSELLING & CAREER
SERVICES** counselling.services@uleth.ca
AH153 | 403-317-2845

University of
Lethbridge



Informed Consent for Continuing Session

Purpose: For you to understand the process and nature of counselling as well as the associated risks and benefits, in order for you to make informed decision about whether to participate or not.

Welcome to Counselling and Career Services!

Congratulations! Making it through our door is not an easy step for many students. Engaging in counselling takes a lot of courage and provides you with the opportunity to discover much about yourself. For many students, this may be your first experience with counselling, and we believe it is important to be clear and transparent about what counselling is, and what counselling looks like at the University of Lethbridge Counselling Services. Please read through the material carefully and bring up any questions that you have so that we can discuss them. Next, we will ask that you sign the form once we have discussed it so that we will have in our records that you read and had the opportunity to discuss the information with the counsellor.

Your First Appointment

The purpose of your initial appointment is to gather information about your presenting concern(s) and/or need(s) and to connect you with the most appropriate services (i.e., personal counselling, groups, out of agency referrals). Intake appointments are 30 min. in length; regular appoints are 50 min. If you and the intake counsellor decide personal counselling is a good fit for you, then (s)he will refer you to a specific counsellor. In order to facilitate continuity of care, information gathered during your intake appointment will be transferred to your assigned counsellor; this may include recommendations for treatment and/or observations. You may discuss any concerns and/or limitations regarding sharing of your information with the intake counsellor.

About Counselling

Risks and Benefits

Counselling is different than talking to a friend or family member. Our conversations have a specific goal, and although the counsellor will be supportive, they also will challenge you. Sometimes you might feel annoyed, tired or upset following a session. This can happen as you are processing new ways of thinking or because you've spoken about something that's been upsetting to you. As a result of counselling, you may experience changes in your relationships or beliefs that have unexpected results. Usually these changes are very positive in the long-term, but it may be difficult to experience as they are occurring. The counsellor may suggest trying specific techniques in your session (i.e., relaxation exercises). If you have any questions about these techniques it's important you ask. It's also important to know you have the right to stop any exercise at any time during the session. Counselling is one form of treatment for client problems-other forms include medications for psychological symptoms, church groups, and physical activity (i.e., yoga). Feel free to ask the counsellor for referral information.

The Relationship With The Counsellor

The relationship you have with the counsellor is different than other relationships. You will be sharing important details with the counsellor, but you will know little about them. This can be difficult sometimes, but as a professional, the counsellor is part of an association that has rules about the types of interactions they are allowed to have with clients. The counsellor is prohibited from engaging in a "dual relationship" with you, or one other than that of client and therapist.

As part of these rules your counsellor:

- Cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides the therapy itself.
- Cannot be your therapist if they are related to you or if they are your friend.
- Cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice.
- Cannot have any kind of romantic, friendship, or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or with any people close to a client.
- Cannot give or receive gifts from clients except tokens with personal meaning to the therapy process.
- Cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator while engaged in counselling with you.
- Cannot attend personal parties/events of clients even if you invite them.

Because your counsellor is very concerned about protecting your confidentiality, your counsellor will not approach or acknowledge you if s/he sees you in the hallway or in the community. This is not meant to be rude, but rather to protect your privacy.

When you have a counsellor, it's important you feel safe with this person. Counsellors should seem real or genuine, and should listen to you and help you find the answers you already know. Sometimes, even though counsellors might be a great fit for a friend, they may not be a good fit for you. If you realize you're not comfortable with your counsellor, you have the right to request a referral.

Likewise, counsellors have the right to feel safe in their work, and also can ask that your care be transferred should they feel uncomfortable or that they are not the best counsellor for you. This can occur if counsellors believe their personal values, experiences, or reactions will interfere with their ability to provide you with the best care possible.

As you and your counsellor have the right to feel safe, it is asked that you do not attend sessions while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This helps to enhance individual safety, while ensuring your participation and disclosures in counselling are voluntary and deliberate. If it becomes apparent that your judgment is impacted by drugs or alcohol, your counsellor may end the current session and ask you to come back.

Embracing Diversity

The student community at the U of L is culturally rich and diverse. Our counselling is non-discriminatory and as a result our counsellors are sensitive to individual, group, and cultural differences in sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, religion, and political views. Our therapists will do their best to accommodate to your worldview through multi-cultural counselling.

Counselling & Confidentiality

We protect your privacy: We are not allowed to tell people if, or why, you are seeking our services (e.g., we cannot talk to your family members or university staff about you). *Did you know there are times when the counsellor and/or the counselling team may not be able to protect your privacy?

Important Limits to Confidentiality:

- A. You give us written permission to share details about you to others (e.g., an academic advisor, your doctor). You have the right to change your mind and revoke that permission at any time.
- B. We use facts about you (e.g., demographics) to compile stats (data entered by our administration staff) and to receive/send emails from our U of L email account. Your information is also stored in our counselling database when you make appointments to receive our services.
- C. Your career counselling file is subpoenaed. We may advocate limiting the information admissible, but the court system has the ultimate right to access your file.
- D. You take legal action against someone on the counselling team. Our staff may then need to access information you shared while accessing our services to handle your complaint. You share in your session information that implies (a) you are in imminent danger of harming yourself or someone else, or (b) someone you know may be in danger (i.e., is being abused, threatened, neglected, or is witnessing abuse) such as university employee(s) or students(s), a dependent adult, a family member, a person under the age of 18, and/or an animal, or (c) there are criminal activities (past or current) that pose a risk to the safety of people, (d) there is maltreatment of client by a helping professional. In the above cases of safety concerns, the counselling team, which includes the counsellor you are working with, is legally and/or ethically obligated to pull in extra help to support you to ensure the safety of all involved, and/or to consult with appropriate professionals. The counsellor will most likely inform you of who they are contacting to help you and others stay safe.
- F. We receive information from university personnel, such as security, that implies you may be at risk for engaging in behaviors that possibility threaten the safety of people on the campus (e.g., made threats to a professor, brought a weapon onto campus). In these cases, we may need to discuss these concerns with Security and/or members of the U of L Behavioural Intervention Committee (BIC). It is important you know our counselling team is very cautious about releasing information about you to others so only the minimal amount of information will be released and recorded in your counselling, at the discretion of the counselling team. The counsellor will likely inform you if a concern arose about your safety towards yourself or others.

Communication

Should we need to contact you, we will try to reach you via the telephone number you've provided to us on the intake form. If our receptionist is phoning you, the number will come up as blocked on your phone. If your counsellor is contacting you from their direct line, their name and extension number may appear on your phone. At times, we may communicate via email. Please be aware that email is not completely confidential. Any email received or sent to your counsellor will be printed out and kept in your file, so discretion on your part is advised.

Mature Minor

If you are under the age of 18, the law states that your legal guardian(s) may have the right to be informed of the contents of your client file. In this case, your therapist will take additional steps to protect your privacy. In some cases, your counsellor will be able to determine that you are a mature minor, which means that you will not need consent from your legal guardians to receive therapy. The counsellor will determine your mature minor status based on your understanding of the nature of therapeutic treatment, the risks and benefits to therapy, and your ability to apply your own values when you make decisions. If you are not a mature minor then your counsellor will ask you to get a signature from your legal guardians before your next scheduled session.

Confidentiality, Supervision & Consultation

To ensure the best service to you, your counsellor engages in supervision. This means that your counsellor may share details of your situation with other counsellors at U of L Counselling Services. They share information to help others learn, or to get feedback on what they may want to do differently in the sessions. These discussions are focused on helping improve the quality of work your counsellor does, and only the details relevant to a particular aspect of your care will be discussed.

In some situations your counsellor may need to consult with staff of U of L Health Services. This is for the purpose of providing coordinated care and means your name and information may be shared. In such a case, your counsellor will share details of the consultation with you. For these purposes, we prefer to have you sign an exchange of information release form but recognize that some situations may not permit this. Please note, other organizations may have different policies regarding confidentiality than Counselling Services.

As part of the supervision process, you may be asked if one of your sessions can be videotaped. These tapes will not be taken off Counselling Services premises, and will be destroyed after 21 days. They will be kept in a locked filing cabinet accessed only by your counsellor and the agency director when not in use. A supervisor or student may also observe a session by sitting in the room or via a two way mirror. You have the right to stop taping or observation at any time during the session, and you have a right to refuse observation or recording of your counselling work. Observation and recording will only occur if you sign the "Consent for Observation/Recording" form.

Your counsellor may access consultation from trained professionals in the community and may engage in group supervision. The names of external supervisors and participants are available upon request. When participating in off-site supervision, your counsellor will not share your name or other identifying information in order to protect your confidentiality.

If you have any questions about these exceptions to your privacy, please ask us — we are devoted to protecting your rights.

Who has access to your information?

At Counselling Services, we utilize an on-line calendar. This means that the receptionist and the other counsellors employed by Counselling Services may see your first and last name, and ID number in the calendar. The calendar may be accessed electronically from any computer and is password protected, but there is a risk that third parties may see your first name and last initial in the system. If a court subpoena a copy of the calendar, a third party may also see those details.

The receptionist has access to your "University of Lethbridge Career Counselling Services: Confidential Client Information Form" which you fill out before your first session. Afterwards, this form is stored in your client file. Our receptionist is bound by an oath of confidentiality and never has the right to release your information or your identifying information to anyone other than the counsellors within the agency.

Release of Information Forms

Should you or your counsellor wish to discuss your situation with another individual or agency, you will need to complete a release of information form stating who they are allowed to speak with and the type of information they can release.

Please know that other units and health centres may not be bound by the same confidentiality rules as Counselling Services. If your counsellor is writing a letter on your behalf, you will have an opportunity to review the letter and may request a copy for your own records. Often you will be expected to take the letter to the other party yourself, as opposed to faxing or mailing options. If you are picking up the documents at our reception desk, you will be required to show ID.

Your File

When you make contact with Counselling Services, a file will be started with your identifying information (name, student ID) on it. This file will include:

- a copy of your transcripts
- your intake form
- consent to release information forms
- consent to participate in counselling form
- copies of any letters written on your behalf
- case notes
- case file from previous counselling contact should you be a returning client

You have full access to your file, and may request it at any time. You may request your counsellor copy the case notes as the counselling proceeds, so you can keep your own file.

How Your Information is Stored

Counselling Services uses a shared filing system. However, your specific counsellor may choose to keep their files in a separate locked cabinet. This means that our receptionist and the other counsellors on site have access to where your files are stored. Our filing policy is as follows:

- All files are stored in locked cabinets in an alarmed area
- Your file will be closed when you and your counsellor terminate counselling, or if we have not heard from you after 30 days
- Files will be shredded after 10 years

Fees and Access to Services

There are no fees for counselling. Career counselling is available to currently registered U of L students and alumni.

Complaint Procedure

If you have a concern about your counselling, we hope you will talk to your counsellor. We take criticisms and suggestions seriously, and will try to respond with care and respect. If you are unable to resolve things with your counsellor, believe that your counsellor will be unwilling to listen and respond, or that they have behaved unethically, you can contact Jennifer Ellis-Toddington (R. Psych), Manager of Counselling & Career Services at 403-317-2845.

If you are still not satisfied with the result, you may contact your counsellor's professional association to file a complaint. Your counsellor should inform you of their professional association during your first meeting and should have their credentials on display in their office. The contact numbers for the professional associations to which the counsellors at the U of L belong are:

- College of Alberta Psychologists (780-424-5070)
- Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (613-237-1099)
- Alberta College of Social Workers (780-421-1167)

Important Contact Information

Community & Emergency Resources

Emergencies (Fire, Police, Ambulance)
911

City Police (Lethbridge)
403-328-4444

Chinook Regional Hospital
403-388-6111

Counselling Agencies - Off Campus

Lethbridge Family Services
403-327-5724

Associates Counselling Services
403-381-6000

Health Clinics - Off Campus

Sexual Health Centre
403-320-0110

Mental Health Clinics - Off Campus

Alberta Mental Health - Help Line
1-877-303-2642

Canadian Mental Health
403-329-4775

Distress Line (24 hour Confidential Phone Line)
403-327-7905

Lethbridge Mental Health Clinics
403-381-5260

Suicide Prevention Help Line (24/7)
1-800-784-2433

Edenbridge Disordered Eating Counselling
403-393-6124

Alberta Health Link
1-866-408-5465
Website: myhealth.alberta.ca

Community Mental Health Services
403-381-5260