Welcome to the MU Counseling Center. In order to better serve you, we would like to provide you with some information about the Counseling Center. This information will be further discussed during your first appointment. If you have any questions, please let your counselor know.

**Your First Appointment:** During your first visit, called the *initial assessment session*, you will discuss your concerns and goals for treatment. This session will help both you and the assessment counselor decide how you can best be helped. These services may consist of individual, couples or group counseling or possibly a referral to an on or off-campus service that may be more appropriate to your needs.

**What is Counseling?** The MU Counseling Center utilizes a short-term model of therapy. This means that counseling is goal-focused and brief. Counseling, whether individual, couples, or group, focuses on resources, solutions and strategies to deal with your presenting problem. While your assessment counselor will ask about many areas of your life, the focus of therapy will be on working toward your specific goals.

- In therapy, you risk learning new things about yourself or your relationships that you don’t like. Often growth cannot occur until you confront issues that cause you to feel sadness, sorrow, anxiety, or pain. Your therapist will be there to support you as you accept the responsibility for making the choices and changes that are required to achieve your goals. There is also the risk that therapy may not resolve your problem or that therapy alone may not be sufficient. Should this be the case, the therapist will explore alternative plans with you.
- In order for counseling to be effective, it is necessary for you to take an active role. Participation involves discussing your concerns openly, completing assignments, and providing feedback to your counselor about the progress of counseling.

**Sessions:** If it is decided that individual therapy at the Counseling Center is recommended, you will be assigned to one of the staff counselors for this purpose. This counselor may or may not be the same person you saw for your assessment. Treatment will be tailored to fit your individual needs and goals so counseling may consist of one or several sessions. The average number of sessions for individual treatment at the Counseling Center is 7 with a maximum of 12 sessions.

If it is decided that group therapy at the Counseling Center is recommended, you will be assigned to one of the current groups. Students can utilize an unlimited number of group sessions per academic year.

The MU Counseling Center may refer you to alternative sources of treatment if the staff determines that the Counseling Center cannot provide the necessary services to address your needs. If you decide that the Counseling Center does not provide the service you desire, we can also assist you with a referral.

**Appointments:** The Counseling Center’s ability to provide services to the greatest number of students is dependent upon you keeping scheduled appointments.

- **Cancellations:** We expect that you will notify us at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to keep an appointment. Excessive cancellations will count toward your session limit.
- **No Shows:** If you have two consecutive no shows or three no shows in one semester, you will not be eligible for therapy for the remainder of that semester, although our crisis services will still be available.

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Your Rights:

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is an extremely important aspect of the counseling relationship. Each of us wants to feel that when we talk about our intimate feelings and life experiences with a counselor, no one else will have access to that information without our permission. In most cases, your written and signed authorization is required before information concerning your care can be disclosed to individuals outside of the MU Counseling Center, including parents, roommates, friends and partners. There are times when your counselor may talk with you about signing a release form to discuss your care with someone outside of our office. Please note that students younger than 18 years of age will need written permission from their parents/guardians to receive treatment.

Below are the cases in which your signed authorization is not needed, in accordance with Missouri law:

- When there is a clear risk of imminent harm to yourself (i.e., suicide) or harm from you to others (e.g., homicide).
- Reports of current abuse or neglect to children or vulnerable adults.
  - This reporting requirement does not apply if you are older than 18 and have been abused in the past. It would apply, even if you are 18 or older, if you told your therapist that you knew for a fact that the abuser was abusing or had abused someone who is currently under the age of 18.
  - A vulnerable adult is defined as someone due to his/her age or disability who cannot protect his/her own interests or meet his/her own needs.
- A court order is received which orders the release of information.
- We may be required to disclose your health information to authorized federal officials who are conducting national security and intelligence activities. By law, we cannot reveal when we have disclosed such information to the government (i.e., Patriot Act).

Group or couples counseling: Because group and couples counseling involve the presence of more than one individual, the therapist is limited in his/her ability to protect confidentiality. We ask that in these situations all those present in the therapy session respect the privacy of each other and refrain from discussing what went on in the counseling session with anyone not involved in the counseling.

Email correspondence: Emails to the Counseling Center or the individual counselors are discouraged. As the retrieval of email is limited to business hours, it is not an effective form of communication in a crisis. In addition, the staff is unable to guarantee the confidentiality of your email.

Respect:
You can expect that your therapist will treat you with respect and exhibit ethical behavior. All Counseling Center therapists abide by a code of professional ethics that protects the welfare of you as a client.

Questions?
If you have any concerns or questions about the quality or delivery of services or concerns related to the ethical conduct of a person that haven’t been addressed to your satisfaction, please ask to speak to:

David Wallace, Ph.D. – Director of the MU Counseling Center
Anne Meyer, Ph.D. – Assistant Director/Clinical Services
(573) 882-6601

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