

CONFIDENTIALITY

1. **Counselling**

Counselling provides a space and opportunity for you to explore behaviour, relationships, feelings, or thoughts, which trouble you and cause difficulty in your life. Counselling is also a legitimate source of support during a crisis or a difficult time. Counselling can bring deeper personal insight and awareness, better ways of understanding and coping with problems, and improved relationships. You should know, however, that counselling sometimes requires that you be willing to examine difficult topics or times in your life, to experience stronger than usual emotions, and to try out new and different behaviours.

2. **Consent for minors**

For clients under the age of 19, Cascadia requires a Parental Consent form to be signed by a parent or legal guardian as permission for the youth to obtain in-person or virtual counselling sessions. If the youth is engaged in family counselling with their parents or guardians, it is considered sufficient parental consent for the youth to receive counselling. If the youth is living alone or other extenuating circumstances are present, the therapist may use clinical judgement to assess the child's ability to provide consent based on their capacity to understand the risks and benefits of services, and the limits of confidentiality.

3. **Collection, use and disclosure of personal information**

Personal information gathered over the course of counselling will be used in accordance with the purposes outlined in the first paragraph. Your file is maintained under the provisions of the Personal Information Protection Act (BC January 1, 2004). Your file is owned by the Counselling Clinic. It is kept in a secure place. It is kept for seven years after the end of contact. You own the contents of your file. You can ask to see your file at any time. You can ask for a summary or copy of your file for yourself or to be given to another professional. There may be a fee associated with this request; please discuss with your therapist. You can also request that errors are corrected in your file. Your request to view, copy, or correct your file must be in writing and the request will be added to your file.

If you have any further questions or concerns about how BC's Personal Information Protection Act or the therapist's personal information policies and procedures apply, please ask.

4. Confidentiality and its exceptions

Confidentiality is a key to the effectiveness of the counselling process, therefore the personal information you share in counselling will be kept confidential. Information will not be shared without your written consent. Confidentiality continues after the end of the counselling relationship. There are, however, some exceptions to the therapist's duty of confidentiality:

- a. If a child or vulnerable adult is or may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or in need of protection
- b. If a therapist believes that you or another person is at clear risk of imminent harm
- c. For the purpose of complying with a legal order such as a subpoena, or if the disclosure is otherwise required or authorized by law

The therapist may also disclose information for the purpose of a professional consultation, in which case your identity will remain confidential.

5. Voluntary participation and right to refuse

You have a right to participate in as much or as little of the counselling process as you choose. You have a right to question, ask for an explanation of, or to refuse any task, exercise, or other intervention the therapist suggests. You have a right to stop at any time, or to ask to work with another therapist. Your therapist has the responsibility to offer an appropriate referral, and you do not have to accept that referral if you do not wish.

If you have been required by a third party to attend counselling sessions and choose to end the counselling relationship, your therapist has the responsibility to notify the third party that you have stopped. If you are working with another therapist, please provide that information to your therapist. This is to help both therapists coordinate practices, if needed, and to avoid confusion and conflict.

6. Reviews, referrals and ending

In counselling, it is your right at any time to:

- a. Have a review of your progress and of any of the topics in this form;
- b. Be provided with a referral to another therapist or health professional;
- c. Withdraw consent for the collection, use, or disclosure of your personal information, except where precluded by law;
- d. End the counselling relationship by so advising the therapist;
- e. Access or obtain a copy of the information in your counselling records, subject to legal requirements.

Your right of access to or to obtain a copy of your personal information continues after the end of the counselling relationship.

7. Therapists

All therapists at Cascadia Counselling Clinic have at least a Master's degree in Counselling or Social Work, and are affiliated with a professional body which registers therapists in British Columbia. Please ask your therapist for their specific degree and registration if you wish to know these details.

8. **Appointments**

Each appointment will be set for a date, time, and length of session that is agreed to by both you and the therapist. Counselling sessions are normally 60 minutes long, but a shorter or longer time can be arranged ahead of time. You are responsible for coming to the session on time, at the arranged time and date. Sessions will end at the scheduled time, so as not to run into the scheduled time for the next client. Sessions can go overtime if both you and the therapist agree. You will be charged for the extended time. If you are late for an appointment, the counselling session will still end at the scheduled time, and you will be charged for the entirety of the booked time. If you would like to change an appointment time or are not able to come to a scheduled appointment, **please give 24-hours notice** so that your time is available for someone else. If you miss an appointment without letting the therapist know, or with less than 24-hours notice, you will be billed for the scheduled time.

9. **Virtual Therapy Sessions (Phone & Video)**

- There are potential benefits and risks of virtual conferencing (e.g. limits to patient confidentiality) that differ from in-person sessions
- Confidentiality still applies for virtual sessions and the session will not be recorded without your permission
- You and your therapist agree to use the video-conferencing platform selected for your virtual sessions, and your therapist will explain how to use it
- You may use a computer with a camera, a tablet or a smartphone for the session
- It is important to be in a quiet, private space that is free of distractions, such as cell phones or other devices and other family members including your children, for the entire duration of the session. This includes ensuring that parents are respectful of their children's privacy while receiving counselling. Conversely, it is important that while parents are receiving counselling, they are out of earshot of their children
- It is important to use a secure internet connection rather than public/free Wi-Fi
- If you are using a phone for video sessions without a Wi-Fi connection, it is your responsibility to ensure your cell phone data coverage is sufficient to not incur a large phone bill
- Please create a back-up plan with your therapist (e.g., phone number where you can be reached) to restart the session or to reschedule it, in the event of technical difficulties

- Discuss a safety plan with your therapist that includes at least one emergency contact and the closest ER to your location, in the event of a crisis situation. The 24/7 toll-free crisis line is 1-888-494-3888
- If you are under the age of 19, Cascadia requires a signed Parental Consent form as permission from your parent or legal guardian for you to participate in virtual therapy sessions
- As your therapist, I may determine that due to circumstances, virtual therapy is no longer appropriate and that sessions should be resumed in person

10. Contact with your therapist between appointments

Please contact your therapist either at 250-590-7050 (main office number) or at the contact number he or she provided to you at initial contact. Phone calls or texts to book sessions or obtain information are not considered billable time; phone calls or texts to discuss more detailed issues will be billed at the agreed upon hourly rate.

The counselling relationship is a professional relationship. Social and business relations between the therapist and a client are discouraged by professional codes of ethics. This applies during sessions, outside of sessions and continues after counselling ends. This includes all social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

11. Concerns

If you have a concern about any aspect of your counselling, you are requested to first address it with your therapist. If this is impossible or unsafe, or if your concern is not resolved through discussion, you may contact the Registrar of the Association with which your therapist is affiliated. For concerns regarding therapists affiliated with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors, the Registrar contact number is 1-800-909-6303. For concerns regarding therapists affiliated with the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association, the Registrar contact number is 1-888-945-2722.

12. Signature

My signature below confirms that I have read the above, had an opportunity to discuss it with the therapist, and had my questions answered to my satisfaction.

Name of Client

Name of Therapist

Signature of Client

Signature of Therapist

Date signed