

## COUNSELLING SERVICES: OTTAWA CAMPUS PRIVACY OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Welcome to Algonquin College's Counselling Services. We are dedicated to helping our students face the many challenges of college life, maintain a sense of mental health and wellness, and chart a fulfilling academic and career path.

### **Confidentiality and your Personal Information**

Counselling Services recognizes that the information you provide to Counselling Services is private, and we are committed to keeping that information confidential. However, there are a few facts about how your information will be collected, used and kept that you should understand prior to speaking with a counsellor. The purpose of this Privacy of Information and Consent Form is to ensure that you understand and agree to the limits to which your information will be kept confidential by Counselling Services.

### **Record of your Use of Counselling Services**

As a professional counselling service, we are required to keep a record of each interaction you have with one of our counsellors. That record will be retained for a period of 10 years after your last contact with us. All members of Algonquin's Counselling Services will have access to this counselling record. This includes all counsellors at the Woodroffe, Perth, and Pembroke Campuses. It also includes the Manager of Counselling Services. Limited access to your counselling record is also given to the Mental Health Nurse in Algonquin's Health Services so they can record information from your referral. Access to Counselling Services' appointment calendar is provided to the employees of the Welcome Centre so that they can book appointments for you. Please note that your counselling record will only be accessed by those listed above in a manner necessary to provide you with appropriate counselling services.

Your counselling record will be stored in a secure manner and its contents will only be accessed by those listed in this document. No information will be released from your record without your consent, except in the circumstances described in the Limits of Confidentiality and Coordination of Student Support Services sections below.

### **Counsellor Supervision and Professional Consultation**

In order to provide the best possible service to you, members of Counselling Services may seek a professional opinion from other members of the counselling team or qualified mental health experts about how to best meet your needs. When discussing your needs with a member of Counselling Services or a qualified expert, every effort will be made to protect your privacy.

## Limits of Confidentiality

Counselling Services is obligated by law to disclose information about you to the appropriate authorities, with or without your consent, in the following situations:

1. There are reasonable grounds to believe that you are likely to harm yourself or another person.
2. There are reasonable grounds to believe that a child under the age of 17 years is at risk of being abused or neglected.
3. There are reasonable grounds to believe that a resident in a long term care or retirement home is at risk of being abused or neglected.
4. Your counselling record has been subpoenaed by a court of law.
5. You disclose that you have been sexually abused by a regulated health professional.

## Termination of Services

Counselling Services primarily provides support to students actively registered in a program of study at Algonquin College. Your access to Counselling Services will be discontinued upon program completion or when you are no longer enrolled in a program of study. Counsellors will work with you to prepare for the planned cessation of services. Should there be an unexpected change in your student status for any reason; Counsellors can provide up to one (1) additional session to assist you in transitioning to community based resources.

## Coordination of Student Support Services

The Managers of Algonquin College's Counselling Services, the Centre for Accessible Learning, and Health Services, along with the Director of Student Support Services, may share information about your needs in order to best coordinate the services to be delivered to you. This may include both receiving information about you from the Centre for Accessible Learning and Health Services and disclosing information about you to those bodies when necessary for your care, or when necessary to assist Counselling Services to assess whether or not there exists a risk of harm to yourself or another person.

## Risks Specific to Online/Phone Counselling

Though we are compliant with the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) and take all reasonable steps to protect the security and confidentiality of information, there are some inherent privacy and security risks with online communication such as information being intercepted or unintentionally disclosed. Also, the inability to see communication in context, including non-verbal communication may lead to misinterpretation of thoughts/feelings. There is also the possibility of service disruption due to technical issues.

## Appropriateness of Telecounselling

There are certain situations or issues, including emergencies and mental health crises, which may not be appropriate for audio/video/computer-based counseling services. These include, but are not limited to:

- Thoughts of hurting or killing one's self or another person
- Hallucinations
- Being in a life threatening or emergency of any kind
- Having uncontrollable emotional reactions; and/or
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs

## Notification of a Release of Personal Information

If Counselling Services releases information about you to anyone outside of those listed in this document, we will notify you as soon as it is appropriate and safe to do so. If you have any questions or concerns about these policies, please feel free to discuss them with Jeff Agate, Acting Manager, Student Counselling and Wellness Supports and Welcome Centre (agatej@algonquincollege.com).

## Your Consent

Important: Should you decide to withhold your consent to the conditions listed in this document by declining to provide your signature below, Algonquin College may decline to provide you with “counselling” support. In such a case, the Counselling Services department will provide you with a listing of available services not affiliated with Algonquin College to help you find a suitable service provider.

**I have read this form and I understand the information that it contains. I hereby consent to allow Counselling Services to collect, retain, and release information in a manner described in this document. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time by submitting a written request to the Manager of Counselling Services.**

Student’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Counsellor’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Personal information is collected by Algonquin College’s Counselling Services in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Information provided by you will not be used without your consent for any purpose other than those stated in this form. Please direct inquiries about the collection, retention, and release of your personal information to the Acting Manager, Student Counselling and Wellness Supports and Welcome Centre (Jeff Agate: agatej@algonquincollege.com or 613-727-4723 ext. 5245).*