CLIENT INFORMATION—AGE 17 AND UNDER

VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY AS A MINOR TO RECEIVE SERVICES

Texas state law requires that we obtain permission from a parent (or managing conservator or guardian) before providing psychological counseling services to you unless any of the following circumstances apply.

- You are thinking about ending your life.
- You have been sexually, physically, or emotionally abused.
- You have concerns about your use of alcohol or other drugs.
- You want to consult about another person you are concerned about.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Until you reach the age of 18, Texas state law permits parents/guardians to request and obtain information from the Counseling Services counselor who provided you with assistance even if parental consent for services was not required. Your counselor will not initiate communication with your parent about your counseling, however.

We will not disclose information about you (which includes verifying that you are or have been a client, your counselor’s written record of your counseling sessions) to persons other than your parents/guardians as described above. There are some exceptions, however. Texas law permits or requires some exceptions to confidentiality for clients of all ages, including

- If your counselor has cause to believe there is a probability of imminent physical injury to yourself or another person.
- If your counselor has cause to believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, neglected, or exploited.
- If you report that you have been exploited sexually by a mental health provider.
- If we receive a court-ordered subpoena.

These and other exceptions to confidentiality are extremely rare. If one should occur, and if possible, we will discuss with you any action under consideration. We are not legally obligated to do so, however, especially if such a discussion would prevent us from securing your safety or the safety of others.

Your confidential counseling file is not part of your academic record; both electronic and hard-copy versions are maintained with a high level of security. Texas law requires that we keep your counseling file for a minimum of seven years after our last contact with you, at which time the electronic and paper files will be destroyed. You may ask your counselor about the content of your counseling record because you have the legal right to know.

In the future, you may be asked whether you have ever received counseling. For example, employers who require a security clearance (e.g., the FBI) or send employees to remote locations (e.g., the Peace Corps) ask applicants if they have received counseling. If the applicant says yes, the employer asks the applicant for permission to obtain information from those who provided the counseling. If this is a source of concern, a counselor can describe the typical nature of these inquiries.

In order to provide you with high quality assistance, your counselor may consult with other counselors on our professional staff. Your counselor and the staff consultants are legally bound to maintain confidentiality. Finally, to protect your confidentiality and avoid the possibility that others will infer that you are a client, your counselor will not speak to you outside of the office unless you speak to her/him first.

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