

Texas A&M University's

CAC

Counseling & Assessment Clinic

**Client Information and
Notice of Privacy Practices**



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School Psychology Program
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Description of Services

The Counseling and Assessment Clinic (CAC) is a non-profit psychological services and training clinic operated under the administration of the Department of Educational Psychology of Texas A&M University. Psychological services are provided by a team consisting of licensed psychologists and mental health professionals from the department's faculty and graduate students who are sufficiently advanced in their clinical training in the specialties of counseling and school psychology. Clinic hours vary each semester and are posted on the outside door at the beginning of each semester.

The CAC offers state-of-the-art psychological services including the most up-to-date treatment methods and computer scored assessment services. The CAC provides both counseling services and assessment services for a variety of presenting problems. The CAC provides counseling and assessment services for all members of the community and university.

Counseling Services

Counseling is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the counselor and client, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods used with the problems that you hope to address. Counseling is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the counseling to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Since counseling often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Counseling often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Counseling clients are initially seen for an intake session or case management session for telepsychology services to determine if the CAC can meet your needs. After the intake session, you will either be assigned to a permanent CAC counselor (who may be your intake counselor) or you will be referred to another agency that can better meet your needs. If you are accepted for treatment in the CAC, you will be normally seen for 1 to 3 additional sessions for evaluation. During this time, you and your counselor can develop your treatment goals. If counseling is begun, your counselor will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) per week at a mutually agreed upon time, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. If you have questions about the procedures, you should discuss them with your counselor whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, your counselor or the CAC Service Coordinator will be happy to help you set up additional referrals.

Assessment Services

Although there is always some element of assessment in any psychological intervention, formal psychological assessment or testing usually consists of several elements. First, you will be interviewed and background information will be obtained. Second, psychological and/or psychoeducational tests will be administered in order to further identify and quantify your presenting problems. Psychodiagnostic testing uses written, oral, and projective instruments to evaluate your mental processes and to assess how thinking and emotions are likely to impact your behavior. Psychodiagnostic testing, because of its standardized and objective qualities, aids the practitioner in developing differential treatment recommendations for you. Finally, after testing has been completed, written and oral feedback of the assessment results will be provided to you.

Many of the psychological assessments conducted in the CAC are for the determination of learning disabilities. These evaluations usually consist of a battery of intellectual, academic achievement, and personality/emotional tests. Obtaining a profile of your learning strengths and weaknesses is essential to understand how best you can learn in an educational setting. In the same way, the CAC also conducts assessments for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders. Finally, more specific psychological assessments are available in the CAC in order to clarify your emotional, intellectual, and/or personality processes. If you have any questions about your psychological assessment, please ask the person conducting your assessment.

Assessment clients are initially seen for an intake session or a case management session for telepsychology approaches to determine if the CAC can meet your needs. If it is determined that assessment services are appropriate, follow-up testing sessions will be arranged at a mutually agreed upon time. Testing sessions usually last from 1 to 4 hours and can occur multiple times over several weeks. After testing has been completed, you will be scheduled for a feedback session so you can discuss the results with your evaluator and you will be provided with a written copy of the results.

Telepsychology

Clients will have the option to engage in a hybrid of services that may include a telehealth platform, which includes video or telephone. The CAC will inquire about your degree of comfort with engaging in telepsychology services and the appropriateness of this platform for your treatment.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Limits of Confidentiality

The code of ethics for psychologists, federal laws, and state laws protect the confidentiality of your health information. This means that CAC generally will not use or disclose your health information without your written permission. In a very small number of cases, however, counselors or evaluators are legally required or authorized to share your information without your consent. These include:

- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** If it is determined that there is a probability of imminent physical injury by you to yourself or others, or there is a probability of immediate mental or emotional injury to you, relevant confidential mental health information may be released to medical or law enforcement personnel.
- **Child Abuse:** If there is cause to believe that a child has been, or may be, abused, neglected, or sexually abused, we must make a report of such within 48 hours to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, the Texas Youth Commission, or to any local or state law enforcement agency.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If there is cause to believe that an elderly or disabled person is in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we must immediately report such to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.
- **Health Oversight:** If a complaint is filed against the CAC or any of its clinicians or supervisors with the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, the Board has the authority to subpoena confidential mental health information relevant to that complaint.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged (protected) under state law, and will not be released without written authorization from you or your personal or legally appointed representative, **or a court order**. The privilege (protection) does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.

In most legal proceedings, you have rights regarding what information is shared regarding your treatment. If your counselor or evaluator is ordered by a judge to testify, which is a rare occurrence, your counselor or evaluator will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Your consent is also not required for the CAC to share your health information for treatment, payment, or health care operations purposes.

This section is only a summary of the CAC's confidentiality obligations with respect to your records. If you have questions or concerns about specific situations or the confidentiality of your records, please speak with your counselor or evaluator.

Supervision and Videotaping

For your protection and for the benefit of the trainees, all work done in the Clinic by students may be videotaped and is closely supervised by licensed or certified mental health professionals. This supervision is provided by discussion of cases between supervisors and trainees both individually and in small groups.

Supervisors may also observe student trainees in their work with you by means of one-way mirrors or by remote TV monitoring. Supervisors may be joined by small groups of student-

trainees during these observations. In all these instances of supervisory work, great care is taken to preserve confidentiality.

All recordings are kept confidential and, without a separate specific consent, recordings will not be taken from the CAC's premises for any reason. In addition, without your specific consent, all video or audio recording of sessions will be completely erased after no more than 60 days of the videotaped session and will not be a part of your formal CAC records.

Since you are receiving care in a training facility, your case may be discussed with other CAC students and staff. In fact, the CAC utilizes a team treatment approach which requires that your case be routinely discussed with anyone involved in your treatment in the CAC. Your CAC chart is shared with any of your primary care providers whether you are receiving counseling or assessment services. Additionally, your counselor or evaluator may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals outside the CAC about your case. During an outside consultation, your counselor or evaluator will make every effort to avoid revealing your identity. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential.

Professional Records

The laws and standards governing the psychology profession require that treatment records be kept. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records or a summary of the records unless your counselor or evaluator believes that seeing them would be harmful to your physical, mental, or emotional health, in which case your counselor or evaluator will be happy to send them to a mental health professional of your choice. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to someone who is not a trained professional. It is recommended that you review them in the presence of your counselor or evaluator so that you can discuss the contents. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent in preparing information requests.

You also have the right to request that your health records be corrected or amended. If the CAC does not agree with your requested corrections, the CAC will notify you in writing and explain why your request was denied. You have the right to submit a statement or disagreement that the CAC will add to your record.

Billing

You will be expected to pay at each session at the time it is held, unless another arrangement is made. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, your counselor or evaluator may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan. Payment may be cash, check, Visa, and MasterCard. For psychological assessment, the fee is based upon a prearranged number of hours and hourly rate from the assessment sliding fee schedule.

The CAC does not take insurance. You should be aware that many insurance companies do not pay for services provided in the CAC due to its designation as a training clinic. You (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of CAC fees. The CAC will provide a

billing statement in order to aid you in filing insurance claims, but the CAC is not responsible for collecting or negotiating disputed insurance claims.

Missed Appointment/Failure to Pay

Personal commitment to counseling is crucial for clients to benefit. It is important to keep all scheduled appointments and to notify the CAC in advance if the appointment must be cancelled. If a client misses an appointment without notifying CAC at least 24 hours in advance, the client will be billed for half the session fee. Additionally, if a client misses two consecutive appointments (by no-show or not cancelling), the CAC reserves the right not to provide services to the client for 60 days.

Clients who do not pay for three consecutive sessions will not be seen again until at least partial payment has been received. Counselors or evaluators will assist in helping to design a workable payment schedule.

Contacting Your Counselor or Evaluator

Your counselor or evaluator will usually not be immediately available by telephone. Please note that your counselor or evaluator's availability and the CAC hours change from day-to-day. Because E-mail is not a secure method of communication, it is the policy of the CAC to not allow communication via E-mail. The CAC will also be closed during University breaks and holidays. When the CAC is open, you can leave a message with the receptionist who will contact your counselor or evaluator. When the CAC is closed, please leave a message on the answering machine.

Be aware that it may be several days before your counselor or evaluator will be able to call you back. Please inform your counselor or evaluator of some times when you will be available. If it is an emergency, please refer to the emergency procedures on the reverse side of this pamphlet or call 911 for emergency assistance.

Emergency Procedures

As a training facility, the Counseling and Assessment Clinic operates on the Texas A&M University schedule. During those times when the Clinic is not open, the answering machine will allow you to leave a message. Night, weekend, and holiday emergency assistance is available through calling 911 or calling one of the following:

MHMR Hotline	979-361-9815 (Ext. 185)
College Station Medical Center	979-764-5100
St. Joseph Hospital	979-776-3777

Grievance Procedure

If at any time you are dissatisfied with the services that you are receiving through the Clinic, please notify Dr. Krystal Simmons, Executive Director. You may also fill out a form

entitled “Is There a Problem?” which is available from the Receptionist. In addition, anyone who believes that a professional licensed by the Board has violated either the Psychologist’s Licensing Act (state law) or the rules of the Board may file a complaint with the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists.

If you believe that your health information has been or may have been used in violation of applicable laws, you may also file a complaint with the Texas Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division.

Admission to Texas A&M University and any of its sponsored programs is open to qualified individuals regardless of race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or educationally-related handicaps.