

Student's Rights and Responsibilities at CAPS

Struggling with emotions is a very typical human experience; our counselors are here to help you better understand your experiences, reactions, behaviors, feelings, and needs. Each of our counselors has a deep respect for the students we serve. Part of that respect for you means that we want to be as transparent as possible about your rights as a client at CAPS. We strive to meet you where you are in terms of your mental health, and to validate your unique experiences and emotions.

When you seek services at CAPS, you have the right to:

Have your identities, beliefs, and values honored, respected, and affirmed.

- All CAPS clinicians are committed to exploring all aspects of your identity and ways they connect and intersect with your mental health. You can expect that we will ask you questions about many identities and work to understand you as a whole person.
- We value your race, religion, class, gender identity, sexuality, ability status, age, national origin, beliefs, values, and your story.

Advocate for your needs

- We strive to make our space welcoming and safe for students, and we want to hear from you if that is not the case. Please speak to your counselor, our Front Desk associates, or email our Clinical Director, Caroline Engler, PhD, at cengler@wcu.edu, if you are uncomfortable with any aspects of our space or your care.

Be an integral part of your own care.

- Our clinicians believe that you are the expert on your own experiences. We seek to understand those experiences and work to break down any barriers to your wellness.
- You will be involved in setting goals for your care and you will know of any diagnosis given.
- You have the right to collaboratively make decisions about your own care. When possible, CAPS clinicians will give you options to determine the direction of your own care.

Understand the counseling process.

- Each counseling experience is different and we encourage you to ask your counselor if you have questions about what happens in your sessions, or any other details of the counseling process.
- You have the right to know about the experiences and qualifications of the counselor you are working with; please ask them about this.
- Your counselor will often make recommendations about interventions or treatment, if you do not understand or if you have any questions about this, please ask your counselor.

Have your information protected and kept private

- Your records at CAPS are not part of your academic record. They are maintained separately at CAPS and kept confidential.
- All communications with your counselor will be kept in confidence and will not, except under the circumstances below, be shared with anyone outside of CAPS unless you complete a written Release of Information.

Legal Exceptions to Confidentiality

- We may disclose confidential mental health information if there is a substantial risk of immediate danger to yourself or someone else, including a potential threat to campus.
- When we have reason to suspect that there is continued abuse or neglect of a minor, elder, or someone who is part of another vulnerable population we are legally required to report this to the Department of Social Services. We strive to include you in this conversation when possible.
- If a judge orders the release of certain information about a client, we are legally required to comply with this order.
- We are permitted by state law to consult with other CAPS providers about your care. If your counselor is supervised by another CAPS clinician you will know the name of their supervisor.
- We are permitted by state law to consult with providers in Health Services, our professional advisors including the university attorneys, and Student Concern Response Team, and to agencies or individuals that oversee our operations or that help us carry out our responsibilities in serving you. When possible, we will inform you of any information that is released.
- We also may disclose information to others involved in your care and treatment such as: (1) a health care provider who is providing emergency medical services to you; and (2) to other mental health professionals when necessary to coordinate your care.

Refuse or end care

- All services at CAPS are voluntary and students have the right to decline services or end their care with CAPS at any time.

When you seek services at CAPS, you have a responsibility to:

Attend scheduled appointments

- You and your counselor will work together to determine when each of your next appointments are scheduled. It's important for your progress, and for best use of our counselor's time, that you keep these appointments. If you need to cancel or reschedule please call the front desk (828) 227-7469 as soon as you can.

Notify your counselor of any changes to symptoms, medications, etc.

- It is extremely helpful for your counselor to know about any changes that are impacting your emotional wellbeing. Even if it feels like a small change to you, let your counselor know!
- We do our best to continue asking about your needs and any recent changes, but the best way for us to know if something is different, is if you let us know.

Let us know about your experience.

- We value feedback directly from students. Each semester we send a client experience survey to students who have used CAPS and we request that you take time to give us feedback.
- If you have immediate feedback, please email our Clinical Director at cengler@wcu.edu