Drexel University
Psychological Services Center
Informed Consent for Treatment

Welcome to the Psychological Services Center at Drexel University (Drexel PSC). This document contains important information about:

1. Professional services at the Drexel PSC and special conditions related to the Drexel PSC being a training clinic;
2. Confidentiality; and
3. Our clinic business practices

It is important that you read this document carefully and that you ask any questions you might have today or before your next session at the Drexel PSC. We will give you a copy to take home. When you sign this document, it will indicate that you have read this carefully and that you understand the information being provided in connection with your treatment at the Drexel PSC. At any time, you should discuss any of your questions or concerns about this information with your treatment professional at Drexel PSC.

Purpose and Mission of the Psychological Services Center

The Drexel PSC is a training site associated with Drexel University's doctoral program in clinical psychology. Clinicians are psychology graduate students who are supervised by the clinical faculty. As a client of the Drexel PSC, your clinician will provide you with the name of his or her supervisor. As part of your evaluation and treatment at the Drexel PSC, you must agree that your evaluation and therapy sessions may be observed and/or recorded (audio/video) for the purpose of student training. The clinician will both view the recordings and discuss your case with his or her supervisor and a small team of clinicians. All such recordings will be deleted as soon as possible and upon termination of your participation as a Drexel PSC client. The only exception to the foregoing is if you otherwise grant permission to maintain these recordings to a faculty supervisor by a separate signed written consent. In addition to training, we also have a service mission. The Drexel PSCis dedicated to providing high quality psychological services to the surrounding community at low cost. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide all services and may have a waiting list depending upon the availability of clinicians. If we cannot assist you, we will attempt to provide you with several referrals.

Psychological Services

Psychological interventions, including psychotherapy, are not easy to describe in a few general statements. Effective treatment depends upon the particular problems you are experiencing, as well as personality factors and establishing a good clinician-client alliance. For therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on the things you talk about both during the sessions and at home. Psychological treatment includes potential for some risk as well as benefits. Since therapy involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings. On the other hand, psychological treatment has been demonstrated to produce many benefits for many people, such as a reduction in distress, solutions to specific problems, and better relationships. There can be no guarantees of what you will experience. The Drexel PSC attempts to minimize risks by providing well-supervised and trained clinicians and by frequent evaluations of client progress/status.

Psychological assessments have the potential to yield data about your level of function, basic abilities, and symptoms as compared to established norms. Sometimes the results of these assessments are reassuring, and other times can be difficult to hear. The Drexel PSC will make every effort to discuss the costs versus benefits of the assessment with you prior to beginning an evaluation and to give you feedback about your scores. Should you be upset by the results of your evaluation, it is important to share your concerns with your clinician at the time of feedback so that he/she can address them with you.

The Drexel PSC hours are limited and may be shorter during Drexel University holidays, vacation times, and summer months. The Drexel PSC does not provide full time phone coverage so it might not be possible to reach your clinician or clinic staff at all times during business hours. However, if you leave a message, every effort will be made to return your call as soon as possible. Please leave detailed contact instructions. The Drexel PSC does not provide emergency services (see Emergency Care and Crisis Situations).

Confidentiality

Pennsylvania law protects the privacy of information obtained from and/or about a client to a psychologist in the course of evaluation and treatment. Every effort will be made to keep your evaluation and treatment strictly confidential. In most situations, the Drexel PSC will only release information about you to others if you sign a written authorization form that meets certain legal requirements. In the following situations, no further authorization is required:

a) Clinical information about your case may be shared fully within the Drexel PSC by the student clinicians working in the Drexel PSC and their faculty supervisors for educational, assessment, and therapeutic purposes. If clinical staff present case information at professional conferences, the information will be disguised such that it is impossible to link the information to you or your family.
b) Personal information is also shared for clinic administrative purposes such as scheduling, billing, and quality assurance. Drexel PSC files are also available to program site visitors. Data contained in your file are available for archival research (i.e., reviews of records to describe clinic referrals, outcomes, and trends) as long as

your identity cannot be linked to the data used. The Drexel PSC uses an electronic medical record system to maintain your client file.

c) On occasion, the Drexel PSC may find it helpful to consult with another health or mental health professional. During such a consultation, every effort is made to avoid revealing the identity of the client. The other professional is legally bound to keep the information confidential.

Limits to Confidentiality

There are situations where the Drexel PSC may be required or permitted to disclose information without your authorization. These include:

a) If the Drexel PSC has knowledge, evidence, or reasonable concern regarding the abuse or neglect of a child, it is required to file a report with the appropriate agency. Once such a report is filed, we may be required to provide additional information.
b) If a client communicates an explicit threat of serious physical harm to a clearly identifiable victim or victims, and has the apparent intent and ability to carry out such a threat, the Drexel PSC may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the appropriate professional workers or public authorities, and/or seeking hospitalization for the client.
c) If we believe that there is an imminent or even high risk that a client will physically harm himself or herself, we will also take protective actions (see Emergency Care and Crisis Situations).
d) Although courts have recognized a clinician-client privilege to confidential communications, there may be circumstances in which a court would order the Drexel PSC to disclose personal health or treatment information. We also may be required to provide information about court ordered evaluations or treatments. If you are involved in, or contemplating litigation, you should consult with an attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order the Drexel PSC to disclose information.
e) The Drexel PSC is required to provide information requested by a legal guardian of a minor child (under age 18 when the legal guardian consented to treatment), including a non-custodial parent.
f) If a government agency is requesting information for health oversight activities or to prevent terrorism (Patriot Act), the Drexel PSC may be required to provide it.
g) If a client files a worker's compensation case, the Drexel PSC may be required, upon appropriate request, to provide all clinical information relevant to or bearing upon the injury for which the claim was filed.
h) If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against the Drexel PSC or professional staff, the Drexel PSC may disclose relevant information regarding the client in order to defend itself.

If any of these situations were to arise, the Drexel PSC would make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking action, and would limit disclosure to information that is relevant and necessary to the purpose for which the information is sought. Although this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you

about potential problems, it is important that you discuss any questions you have with us now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

Emergency Care and Crisis Situations

The Drexel PSC is not able to provide emergency services or psychiatric medications. Individuals, who because of psychiatric difficulties need substantial case management, ongoing medication adjustments, and/or emergency clinician access, are generally not appropriate for a training clinic. Such clients may be seen at the clinic when their situation is stable.

Clients who are experiencing a crisis are encouraged to discuss this with their clinician as soon as possible so that a crisis plan can be developed. A crisis may be generally defined as a situation or period in which the person's usual coping resources fail and he or she experiences a state of psychological disequilibrium in which he or she may be at risk for impulsive or harmful behavior. Clients in crisis may or may not constitute an imminent danger to themselves or others; nevertheless, sometimes a judgment must be made to protect the client.

The policy of the Drexel PSC, to which you consent as a client, is to provide conservative treatment during a crisis situation. Your clinician would work with you to establish a plan to restore normal functioning as soon as possible. In addition to coping skills and possible environmental changes, this may include consultation with your physician, or if necessary, a family member or significant others. If you are a student living in university housing, it may mean letting appropriate university officials know of your situation. The clinic may divulge your client status and the minimal treatment information necessary to protect you during a crisis period. The need for such action will be discussed with you beforehand if at all possible. This exception to normal confidentiality would remain in effect until the crisis is over or your care has been successfully transferred to another mental health provider or treatment program. This crisis protocol requires you trust in our professional judgment to balance risks with your rights to confidentiality. The crisis policy is consistent with a training clinic that supervises graduate trainees. The clinic instructs clients who cannot reach us and are having an emergency to contact their physicians or other community resources directly. Below you will find a listing of emergency contact numbers in Philadelphia, and/or based on specific problems (e.g., suicidality):

Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP) Psychiatric Emergency Evaluation Center (PEEC) Ground Floor of Ravdin Building at 34th and Spruce Streets. (215) 662-2121	University City

Pennsylvania Hospital (Hall Mercer) Eighth and Locust St. (215) 829-5249	Center City South Philadelphia
Mercy Hospital 501 S. 54th Street (54th & Cedar Ave.) (215) 748-9525	Southwest Philadelphia West Philadelphia
Einstein at Germantown Community Center 1 Penn Blvd. (215) 951-8300	Northwest Philadelphia Germantown Roxborough *Assesses Children Citywide*
Temple/Episcopal Hospital 100 E. Lehigh Ave. (215) 707-2577	North Philadelphia

FOR ALL CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS (anyone under age 18), please utilize Einstein Hospital at Germantown Community Center, 1 Penn Blvd., 215-951-8300.

THE SUICIDE AND CRISIS INTERVENTION LINE AT 215-686-4420 can be contacted 24-hour per day, 7 days per week.

THE OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EMERGENCY/INFORMATION LINE AT 215-685-6440 can be called any time of the day or night, if you are seeking help for a family member, a relative, or a friend who has a mental/emotional or substance abuse problem, to discuss the matter with a trained professional. The staff that work on this line have direct assess to 24 hour crisis response centers, home visiting assessment teams, crisis specialists, and critical information regarding how to utilize the services of the behavioral health system including help in getting treatment for unwilling persons who are dangerous to themselves or others. If necessary, the Emergency Line will send the Mobile Emergency Team (MET) to your location.

Call the **Emergency Line at 215-685-6440** to get immediate help for children. They will send someone to your home or tell you where to take your child. You can also call 888-545-2600, and Community Behavioral Health (CBH) Member Services will connect you to the emergency hotline.

If your emergency is life threatening, call 911 or go directly to the nearest Emergency Room.

Professional Records and Client Rights

The laws and standards of the psychology profession require that Drexel PSC keep Protected Health Information (PHI) about you in your clinical record. Generally, you may examine and/or receive a copy of your clinical record, if you request it in writing. There are a few exceptions to this access:

1) If, in our judgment, we believe that content of the record will cause you harm.
2) When the record makes reference to another person (other than a health care provider) and we believe that access is reasonably likely to cause substantial harm to that other person.
3) Where information has been supplied confidentially by others.

Also, the clinic will not release copyrighted test information or raw data. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted. For this reason, the clinic recommends that you initially review them in the presence of your clinician, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. The Drexel PSC keeps no additional notes (sometimes called psychotherapy or process notes) beyond the clinical record.

Couples, Families, and Minors

Any record keeping for family/couples therapy is kept in a single file. Because the file may contain information about multiple adults, written permission from all adults capable of providing consent who are part of the family/couple therapy is necessary to release information to any party.

Minors aged 14 and over have the right to consent to psychological treatment in Pennsylvania. If an individual aged 14 or over consents to treatment, the record belongs to that individual and he/she determines whether or not confidential information may be released. If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the child, aged 14 or over have consented to treatment, they would control the record, the same as if the child were a minor under age 14. Parents have access to the records of minors (except those of a consenting minor age 14 or older), regardless of custody situation, unless a court has ruled otherwise. However, given the need for minors to trust their clinicians, unless as indicated otherwise by the treatment approach being implemented, parents/guardians understand that it is the policy of the Drexel PSC to only disclose information to them that includes general information about the progress of the child's treatment, his/her attendance at appointments, and information necessary to keep the child safe if there is imminent danger (e.g., suicidality). Experimentation with substances, piercings, or tattoos is not defined by our practice as imminent danger. Any other communication will require the child's authorization. We will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections he/she may have.

It is the policy of the Drexel PSC that custody papers and joint consent must be provided in all cases where the parents are no longer living together.

When minors (anyone under age 18) are involved in treatment at the Drexel PSC (whether it be assessment, individual therapy, or family therapy), unless the express purpose of the evaluation is for custody purposes, the Drexel PSC staff WILL NOT make judgments related to custody of a child. Parents or guardians who consent to treatment of a minor agree that our involvement in parental disputes will be limited to that which benefits the child. This means that the parent(s)/guardian(s) agree to treat anything said in session as confidential. They agree that neither will attempt to gain advantage in any legal proceeding between the

two of them based on our relationship with their child. Neither parent/guardian will ask us to testify in court, whether in person, or by affidavit. They also agree to instruct their attorneys not to subpoena staff of the Drexel PSC or to refer in any court filing to anything said or done in treatment at the Drexel PSC. Such an agreement may not prevent a judge from requiring our testimony. If we are required to testify, we are ethically bound not to give opinions about either parent's custody or visitation suitability. If a custody evaluator, guardian ad litem, or parenting coordinator is appointed, we will provide him/her information as needed (provided we have appropriate releases or a court order to do so), but will not make any recommendation about the final decision.

Research

The psychology clinic also provides a site for clinical research conducted by graduate students and clinical faculty. Clients may be approached for participation in clinical research studies conducted by the Drexel PSC faculty and/or their graduate students who have received prior approval for the specific study from the Drexel University Institutional Review Board. Prior to any research participation, a separate informed consent fully explaining the study must be provided, and the individual can choose either to participate or not to participate. Any client who decides not to participate in a study will not be penalized (i.e., services to which they are ordinarily entitled through the Drexel PSC will not be withheld if you choose not to participate in any research study). As mentioned above, data contained in your file are available for archival research (i.e., reviews of records to describe clinic referrals, outcomes, and trends) as long as your identity cannot be linked to the data used.

Fees, Billing, and Payment Policy

The Drexel PSC charges different fees depending on the service provided (e.g., assessment, group therapy, individual therapy). The fee will be determined on the basis of a sliding fee scale that takes into account your income and the number of people in your home who are supported by that income. All fees are expected to be paid at the time services are rendered. It is Drexel PSC practice to charge you for missed appointments unless you cancel 24-hours in advance of the appointment. The Drexel PSC does not bill for partial sessions. Should you not arrive at your scheduled appointment time, you will still be responsible for the cost of a full session. If your financial circumstances change or you have financial difficulties, you are encouraged to work out a payment plan with the Clinic Director.

Should you not pay for the services you receive within a period of 60 days, the Drexel PSC has the option of using legal means to secure payment. This may involve contracting with a collection agency which requires us to disclose otherwise confidential information. In most collection situations, the only information the Drexel PSC releases is the client's name, contact information (e.g., address), nature of the services provided, and the amount due.

The Drexel PSC does not contract with any health insurance companies and does not bill insurance companies. We are happy to provide you with documentation of services provided should you choose to submit a claim to your insurance company. Please be advised that most insurance plans will not cover the cost of services provided by trainees.

We do not participate in Medicare or Medicaid. Additionally, some plans require prior authorization for mental health services and plans frequently limit the number of allowed sessions. If you plan to submit a claim with your insurance company, please call your plan administrator to have any questions answered. Ultimately, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of the Drexel PSC fees.

I agree to pay _____ per session (or missed session not cancelled 24-hours in advance).

I agree to pay _____ for a testing evaluation.

Client Responsibilities

As a client of the Drexel PSC you agree to:

1) Keep regular appointments and actively participate in your treatment.
2) Attempt any therapeutic assignments you agree to perform.
3) Make a commitment to living and using Drexel PSC and community resources to solve difficulties. You agree to disclose to your clinician whenever you feel in crisis and/or suicidal, to work with the clinician to come up with a crisis plan, and to give the Drexel PSC discretion regarding needed disclosures in a crisis situation.
4) Not to come to the Drexel PSC under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. If you were to appear intoxicated, and at your clinician's request, you agree to refrain from driving yourself. Failure to do so would result in a DUI report.
5) Never bring a weapon of any sort to the Drexel PSC or on campus.
6) Ask your clinician questions right away if you are uncertain about your evaluation, therapeutic process, or any Drexel PSC policy.
7) Pay agreed upon evaluation and treatment fees or make arrangements to do so.