

INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES

Welcome!

For you to make an informed decision about whether to participate in counselling please read through the following document. Your counsellor will go through this information with you during your first appointment. They will ask that you sign page 5 and, if applicable, pages 6-8. Please ask questions or address concerns before signing. These pages will then be added to your file to indicate you have read and had the opportunity to discuss this information.

Reminder. Do your best to attend scheduled appointments even if you do not always feel like it. If you cannot attend an appointment, contact your counsellor directly, text/call 587-370-3728 or email counsellingservices@fcss.ca. Be sure to provide your full name, name of your counsellor, and the date and time of the scheduled appointment. When cancelling or rescheduling an appointment, please give at least 24 hours' notice. If you are late for an appointment, your appointment will still end at the same scheduled time.

FCSS Counselling Services provides:

- FREE short-term counselling services aimed at addressing primary issues/concerns, focusing on desired goals.
- In-person, online video, and telephone sessions for individuals, couples, and families.
- Prevention and strength-based approaches.
- Support and Psycho-educational groups.
- Skill-based workshops/presentations

FCSS Counselling Services does not provide:

- Long-term counselling support for chronic ongoing issues, as per our mandate.
- Assessments, diagnosis, or treatment for severe mental health disorders.

About Counselling:

Risks

- Feeling emotionally uncomfortable as you explore different aspects of your life (you may feel emotionally drained after a session).
- Having past memories or less helpful thoughts resurface or pop into your head.
- Feeling uncomfortable to talk about yourself and your life with another person.
- Changes in relationships.
- Sessions focus on change. Counsellors might challenge clients by asking, "what are you doing to achieve your goals for change?"
- While you have the right to stop counselling at any time, stopping may prolong or aggravate your reason(s) for participating.

Benefits

- Feeling heard and understood.
- Learning about additional community resources to help you meet your goals.
- Positive changes in relationships. There may be improvement in, interpersonal skills, your ability to set boundaries, and/or being able to express yourself effectively.
- Life changes and meeting your counselling goals.
- There is no fee for the counselling services provided.

Your Rights/Responsibility as a Client Receiving Counselling:

- Ask questions about any aspect of the counselling process.
- Quit at any time.
- Create your own counselling goals.
- Review your counselling file upon written request.
- Request a different counsellor with FCSS or a referral for another service if your counsellor is not the right fit for you.
- Give feedback as to what you like and do not like about the service you are receiving.
- **Confidentiality**
 - Your counsellor cannot tell other people about your participation in counselling, including any third party, without your written permission.
 - Your counsellor cannot discuss with other people information shared during a session, including any third party, without your written permission or consent.
 - Exceptions to confidentiality:
 - You are at high risk of harming yourself or harming someone else.
 - A judge asks for client information.
 - You are under the age of eighteen – your legal guardians must give us permission to work with you. See minor consent for additional information below.
 - You have made a complaint against one of our staff.
 - The law requires your counsellor to share information (i.e., WCB, Children's First Act).
- **Supervision**
 - To ensure the best service, your counsellors engage in individual and peer supervision. This means that your counsellor may share details of your situation with the Counselling Services Supervisor, and other counsellors at FCSS Counselling Services. Your name and specific demographic information will not be shared. These discussions focus on helping improve the quality of care you are provided and only details relevant to a particular aspect of your care will be discussed.
 - The Counselling Services Supervisor will have access to your counsellor's schedule and your name and contact information. This person will contact you if your counsellor is not able to make your appointment.
 - The Counselling Services Supervisor will have access to your file, including session recordings, if applicable, for the purposes of consultation, file audits, and file destruction.
- **Team-Based Approach**
 - To ensure quality of service and best practices, your counsellor may choose to utilize team-based case consultation with other FCSS service providers, with your consent.
 - External consultations and referrals will require you to complete a Permission For Referral and/or Case Consultation form. This form identifies the person(s) being consulted and/or receiving the referral, the purpose for the consultation and/or referral, specific information you consent to be shared, and the duration of the consent.

Your File

During your first session, your counsellor will create an electronic file which has an external server in Canada.

- Your file will include: Registration form, Informed Consent for Counselling Services, Counselling Assessment, and Session Notes.
- Your file may include when applicable: Request to Access Information forms, Permission for Referral and/or Case Consultations forms, Copies of any submitted

forms, legal documents, completed homework, Request to Change Service Provider forms, Counselling Extension Request forms, Supervision Log/Notes, Risk Assessment/Disclosure forms, or Client Attendance Letters

- FCSS administrative staff and management will have access to clients' demographic information only for quality control as well as to ensure consistent services.

- **How Your Information is Stored**

- Counselling Services uses an online data tracking and a client record keeping system that has an external server in Canada. We do not store any client information on our phones, computer systems, or hard copies.?
- Counselling staff are *NOT* permitted to view another counsellor's file for any reason unless given written permission.
- Your file will be closed upon termination of counselling, or if there has been no contact for 90 days.
- FCSS minimum retention period for files for adults is 10 years after the date of last service. For counselling clients under 18, records will be kept for 10 years after their 18th birthday. Client files under 18 years of age who have been victims of family violence (sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect), will be kept for 100 years from the date of last contact.

- **Access Your Information**

- Should you require information within your file you will need to complete a Request to Access Information Form stating specifically what information you would like copied. We do not release copies to third parties. We do not send copies via fax or email. Copies of files must be picked up in person and proof of identity must be provided.

- **Expressing Concerns**

If you have a concern about your counselling, talk to your counsellor.

- If you are unable to resolve things with your counsellor, believe that your counsellor will be unwilling to listen and respond, or that they have behaved unethically, contact the FCSS Counselling Services Supervisor or FCSS Executive Director
- If you are still not satisfied with the result, you may contact your counsellor's professional association to file a complaint. Your counsellor should inform you of their professional association during your first meeting and should have their credentials on display in their office.

The Relationship with Your Counsellor

Your Counsellor is part of a professional association that has rules about the types of interactions they are allowed to have with clients. Your counselor is prohibited from engaging in a "dual relationship" with you, or one other than that of client and therapist.

As part of these rules your counsellor:

- Cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you
- Cannot be your therapist if they are a family member, friend, or co-worker.
- Cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice.
- Cannot engage in any friendship, sexual or romantic relationship with a current or former client, or with any individual deemed to be close in a client's life?
- Cannot exchange gifts with clients, except tokens with personal meaning to the therapy process.
- Cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator while engaged in counselling with you.
- Cannot attend personal parties or events of clients.
- Cannot acknowledge you in public (unless you greet your counsellor first).

Responsibilities of Your Counsellor

- Treat you with respect, not discriminate against you in any way, or for any reason.
- Help you identify counselling goals.
- Use your counselling time to focus on change and meet your goals.
- Describe ideas and strategies on the direction of counselling, including the risks and benefits of various interventions.
- Complete notes in your file during or after your session.
- Help you connect with other resources that could help with your counselling goals.
- Close your file if you have not been in contact with your counsellor for 90 days.
- **Neutrality**
 - If you wish to enlist the services of FCSS Counselling Services for yourself or for your family, it is important to understand and accept that FCSS Counsellors will never:
 - Accept a request to become involved in any legal litigation (custody, access or parental dispute),
 - Provide a written report of any kind, and/or testify in a court proceeding. If the services of a mental health professional are desired for court purposes, a person outside of FCSS must be enlisted
- **Communication**
 - Should a counsellor need to contact you, they will try to call or text you on the phone number you provided on the registration form.
 - When you receive a telephone call from a counsellor, the number will display as private/no caller ID on your phone. Counsellor may communicate via email if necessary.
 - Please be aware that email is not completely confidential.
 - Email or texts, received by your counsellor, that contain information regarding counselling sessions will be uploaded to your file, so discretion on your part is advised.

Client Consent to Counselling

Please place a checkmark beside each statement as an indication that you have read it.

- ☐ I have read the Informed Consent for Services document, had sufficient time to consider it carefully, asked any questions that I needed to, and understand it.
- ☐ I agree to engage in service provision under the conditions outlined in this document.

Client Name (PRINT)	
Client signature:	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
For your Counsellor: ☐ I, as the Counsellor, have discussed the issues within this consent with my client ☐ My observations of this person's behaviour and responses indicate that this person understands the rules and provisions as set out above and is competent to give informed and willing consent at this time. ☐ Level of consent obtained: ☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ Assent	
Name of FCSS Counsellor (PRINT):	
Signature of FCSS Counsellor:	Date (dd/mm/yyyy):