

Parkland College | Counseling Services | Mental Health Counseling

Scheduling and Privacy Policies

Introduction to Counseling:

Parkland College offers short-term, supportive-counseling services to current Parkland students in order to assist our students in being academically successful. The services are free of charge to current Parkland students. There are many different methods you and your counselor may use to manage the challenges you are experiencing. However, all successful counseling calls for a very active effort on your part. You will have to commit to work on issues both when meeting with your counselor and during your daily life. As counseling often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, and helplessness. Share what you are experiencing with your counselor. We are here to assist you as you explore your various issues and concerns. Supportive counseling has been shown to lead to better relationships, improvement of academic success, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress.

Initial Appointment:

Your first appointment is an intake consultation, so the person you see may or may not become your assigned counselor. Please plan to have the initial appointment take between 60-90 minutes. To keep the initial appointment closer to 60 minutes, please complete the Intake Form prior to this appointment and have the form with you when you check in.

The intake counselor will work with you to determine if the Counseling Services department at Parkland College is able to provide the kind of assistance you need and which staff member would be most appropriate to work with you. If you need or request services beyond the scope of what we can provide, we will refer you to an appropriate outside agency.

If you are already receiving counseling services in the community, we will discuss the nature of those services and may refer you back to your community provider if it appears there will be a duplication of services.

Scheduling Policy:

With the exception of emergency situations, services at the Counseling Services department are provided on an appointment basis.

Appointments typically last 50 minutes. When you request services with us, time is reserved on a counselor's schedule for your appointment. Missed and canceled appointments prevent valuable, limited staff time from being offered to other students in need.

In an effort to ensure that we are providing services in the most effective manner possible, we have established the following policies:

- Please call, (217) 351-2219, if you will be late or need to cancel or reschedule an appointment. We would appreciate as much advance notice as possible, preferably at least 24 hours prior to your appointment time.
- If you arrive 15 or more minutes late for your appointment, you will be considered a No Show and you will need to reschedule.
- Due to the high demand for services, students are currently limited to a maximum of 8 sessions per semester. All missed and canceled appointments (without 24-hour notice) will count toward the total number of sessions available to you. Group counseling sessions are not included in this limit.
- We may terminate supportive-counseling services if two consecutive or four total appointments are missed (i.e., not canceled 24 hours prior to the session). Services may also be terminated if an excessive number of sessions are canceled.

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Notice of Privacy Practices/Informed Consent

Confidentiality: How your privacy is protected:

Counseling is confidential. We will use and protect your information in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Illinois Mental Health and Development Disabilities Confidentiality Act. Counseling records are kept separate from academic records to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. Counseling Services uses an electronic record keeping system that is maintained on a secure server.

To further protect your confidentiality, Counseling Services staff members do not acknowledge that they are familiar with students while outside the department, unless the student acknowledges the staff member first. Communications from our office may be delivered by various technology based on client consent (i.e. letter, phone, email).

Information obtained during counseling sessions will not be disclosed to anyone outside the department without your knowledge and written consent. Exceptions to this are for professional supervision, consultation, and for instances of institutional safety. If you sign a written authorization allowing us to disclose information (such as to an outside agency), you can later cancel your authorization in writing, and we will not disclose any further information after we receive your cancellation.

The only exceptions to these strict confidentiality rules are those instances where counselors are required to reveal particular information by federal, state, or local laws. Such exceptions include when:

- We believe that a student presents with a serious and foreseeable harm and/or imminent danger to herself/himself or another person.
- We have reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected or a vulnerable elderly individual is being subject to abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.
- We receive a valid court order signed by a judge.
- We are approached by authorized federal officials for information related to national security and intelligence activities.

Training/Supervision:

To provide you with the best possible care, your counselor may consult with or receive supervision from another member of our staff. Some services may be provided by graduate level interns who are carefully selected by the department as trainees. Interns may record sessions for case review and training purposes only. Recordings will only be done with your consent. Recorded material is treated with the same regard for confidentiality as is other client information.

As a student seeking services, you have the right to:

- Request and provide written authorization to release information. You have the right to revoke your authorization in writing at any time.
- Review your file with your counselor.
- Request that your counselor amend any information in your file that you believe is incorrect or incomplete. Your request must be in writing and must explain the reason(s) for the amendment. We will consider your request, but we are not legally required to amend your record if we believe it is accurate and complete. In that case, you may respond with a written statement of disagreement and ask that the statement be included with your record.
- Request communications from our office be delivered via alternative means or at alternative locations.
- Request an accounting of disclosures of information made about you. Other than the exceptions previously outlined, no disclosures will be made about you without your written or verbal consent.
- Obtain an additional copy of our Privacy Practices at any time during treatment.

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The Counseling Services Department has the responsibility to:

- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the information you share with us. We will not use or disclose your protected information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.
- Abide by the terms of this notice for as long as it is in effect. We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected information we maintain. Should our information practices change, we will create and post a revised notice.
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction.
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate information by alternative means or at alternative locations. Email is not a permissible means of communication due to concerns about the confidentiality of electronic transmissions.

Questions or Complaints:

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights or disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact the Dean of the Counseling Services at (217) 351-2219 and/or the Dean of Students at (217) 351-2505.

All complaints must be submitted in writing to either the Dean of Counseling Services or Dean of Students.

Dean of Counseling Services
Counseling Services | U264
Parkland College
2400 West Bradley Avenue
Champaign, IL 61821

Dean of Students
Dean of Students Office | U243
Parkland College
2400 West Bradley Avenue
Champaign, IL 61821

If you file a complaint, we will not take action against you or change our treatment of you in any way.

*We appreciate your consideration of these policies.
Please speak with your counselor if you have any questions.*



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Non-Crisis Telecounseling Consent

The majority of supportive counseling sessions at Parkland College in the Counseling Services Department are in-person; however, there may be times when a face-to-face session is not possible. During these times, Counseling Services would like to offer counseling support services via the phone.

It is necessary to inform you that even with telehealth laws and guidelines, there is still the potential threat of hacking and unauthorized access to PHI (personal health information). In other words, phone sessions do not have the same guarantee of privacy as face-to-face sessions in our Counseling Services office. Furthermore, confidentiality is also impacted by the privacy of the space where you, our student, participate in your session.

One of the benefits of telecounseling is that the student and counselor can engage in services without being in the same physical location. Although there are benefits of telecounseling, there are some risks. For example:

- *Risks to confidentiality*
Because telecounseling sessions take place outside of the Counseling Services office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On our end, our counselors will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in session only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- *Issues related to technology*
There are many ways that technology issues might impact telehealth. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to access or hear our private conversation.
- *Efficacy*
Most research shows that telecounseling is about as effective as in-person counseling. However, some clinicians believe that something is lost by not being in the same room.

These are examples and not designed to be an all-inclusive list of the possible disadvantages of telecounseling.

Recording of Sessions:

I agree not to record any of my counseling sessions and I understand that my counselor will also not record any of our sessions.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification about this policy.
I do recognize the potential risk of compromise to my confidentiality by using my phone.
I wish to proceed knowing these risks.

First and Last Name
(please print)

Student ID#

Parkland Student Email

Signature

Date