

Counseling & Psychological Services *Social Media Policy*

This document outlines the Kutztown University Counseling & Psychological Services policies regarding the use of electronic modes of communication including social media. Please read it carefully to understand how our center's counselors conduct themselves on the Internet as mental health professionals and how you can expect them to respond to various interactions that may occur between counselors and clients on the Internet.

Many of these common modes of communication put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the law and with the standards of the mental health profession. Consequently, this policy has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law.

If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to discuss this with your counselor.

Email:

Confidentiality. CPS uses email communication only with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless you and your counselor have made another agreement. That means that ***email exchanges with the office staff and/or your counselor should be limited to things such as scheduling and changing appointments.*** ***Please do not e-mail content related to your therapy sessions,*** as e-mail is not completely secure or confidential.

If you choose to communicate with your counselor by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and counselor's Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider. This type of communication may compromise your confidentiality.

If you need to contact your counselor between sessions, the best way to do so is by calling the office at 610-683-4072. You also can call the office and talk to the administrative staff for issues such as changing appointment time.

Emergencies. E-mail is not considered to be an appropriate means of communication when you are in crisis. Due to computer or network problems, e-mails may not be deliverable, and counselors may not check e-mails or faxes daily.

If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, please call the office at 610-683-4072 during business hours (8:00-4:00 M-F when classes are in session). When the office is closed, please contact Holcomb Crisis Intervention (Berks County) at 610-379-2007, contact Public Safety at 610-683-4001, or call 911. You may also seek emergency care at the emergency department of your local hospital.

Records. Mental health providers are cautioned to maintain printed copies of all messages to and from clients. These copies will be kept in your chart. Consequently, you should be aware that any emails that are received from you and any responses that are sent to you become a part of your legal record.

If your e-mail communication requires more than 10 minutes to read and respond to, this is considered a clinical service and will be documented as such in your chart. If you decide to communicate confidential or private information via e-mail, your counselor will assume that you have made an informed decision.

Text Messaging:

Because text messaging is a very unsecure mode of communication and it may compromise your confidentiality, counselors will not send text messages to you, nor will they respond to text messages from anyone in treatment with them. Texting may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

CPS administrative staff will use text communication only with your permission and only for administrative purposes (appointment reminders). Again, ***please do not text content related to your therapy sessions***, as e-text is not completely secure or confidential.

Social Media / Friending:

Please do not use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn to engage with your counselor or CPS administrative staff. ***Counselors, counselor trainees, and staff will not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site.*** There are several reasons for this policy:

- 1) These sites are not secure and counselors/staff may not read these messages in a timely fashion.
- 2) CPS counselors believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites may expose the nature of your professional relationship, compromise your confidentiality and the counselor's privacy.
- 3) It could blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship.
- 4) It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

Consequently, if a CPS counselor or staff member discovers that they have accidentally established an online relationship with you, they will immediately cancel that relationship.

Thank you for taking the time to review the *CPS Social Media Policy*. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding our potential interactions on the Internet, do bring them to your counselor's attention so that you can discuss them.

By signing below, I am indicating that I have read this document, understand my rights as a client, and accept the responsibility as stated. I have been offered a printed copy of the CPS Social Media Policy and all questions regarding these policies have been answered to my satisfaction.

Client Name: _____

Client Signature/Date: _____

Counselor Signature: _____