

Student Counseling and Psychological Services (S-CAPS)

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PHONE and/or ZOOM CONSULTATION APPOINTMENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus and recommended quarantine/social distancing, staff members are not at the office. There will not be a regular schedule of treatment (counseling) or teletherapy provided. However, we can connect via phone or Zoom video communications in order to discuss how best to take care of yourself during this time away from campus, explore sources of support near your home, and/or discuss next steps.

All staff members will be available remotely. We offer phone consultation and Zoom appointments based on availability during business hours, Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm. To schedule a time, contact S-CAPS by phone at 201-692-2174 and leave a message. Messages are checked every 2 hours (during working hours). Clearly state your name and phone number. A staff member will be in touch to schedule a time to talk. Expect a phone call back from a blocked or private number. If you do not have phone, please email mills@fdu.edu or mednick@fdu.edu

This Informed Consent for phone consultation or Zoom appointments contains important information focusing on engaging in communication. Please read this carefully, and let the staff member know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and the staff member.

Benefits and Risks of Phone and Zoom Consultation Appointments:

These resources refer to providing services remotely using cell phone, land-line, and video communication technologies. One of the benefits of these services is that the staff member can engage in self-care and wellness inquiry without being in the same physical location as the student. This can be helpful in ensuring basic continuity of support during a time when the student and staff member are otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. Although there are benefits to these services, there are significant differences from the kind of support that you would receive in a counseling relationship, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because phone and video consultation takes place outside of the staff member's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear exchanges of information if you are not in a private place during the call. **On our end, a staff member will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure that you find a private place for your call, where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your communication on your cell phone, computer, or other device. You should participate in a phone or video consultation 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 the phone call or video communication. For example, the phone or other electronic device may stop working during a consultation, other people might be able to get access to our private interaction, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention during this time. Usually, staff members will not engage in consultation with students who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. While engaging in a consultation, you and the staff member may decide to develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that require a higher level of support.

Electronic Communications

These S-CAPS phone and video conferencing services are free to all currently enrolled/currently registered Fairleigh Dickinson University students. This includes part-time, full-time, commuter, residential, undergraduate, and graduate students.

For communication between phone calls and video conferences, the S-CAPS staff will only use email communication for administrative purposes. This means that email exchanges with the S-CAPS should be limited to administrative matters, such as setting and changing phone and video conference consultation times and other related issues. You should be aware that S-CAPS cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email. Therefore, the S-CAPS staff will not discuss any clinical information by email and prefer that you do not either. Also, S-CAPS staff do not regularly check email, nor do they respond immediately, so these methods should not be used if there is an emergency.

Appropriateness of Phone and Video Consultation Appointments

Staff members will let you know if phone or video communication services are no longer the most appropriate form of support for you. In such a case, the staff member will discuss referrals to another professional in your area who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies are difficult when conducting phone and video communication services. To address some of these difficulties, you and the staff member may decide to create an emergency plan should a need arise. He or she may ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location that the staff member can call in the event of a crisis or emergency. The staff member may also ask for your exact location and address at the beginning of each phone or video consultation, and may call 911 and provide this information on your behalf in case of an emergency.

If the phone call or video communication is interrupted for any reason, such as a dropped phone connection or internet/web access issue, and you are having an emergency, do not call or attempt to re-connect with the staff member; instead, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. You can re-connect with the staff member after you have called for or obtained emergency services.

If the phone call or video communication is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, the staff member will wait two (2) minutes and then attempt to re-contact you. If there is a phone failure or internet access issue and the staff member is unable to resume the connection, they will contact you by email to reschedule.

Records

These phone and video services shall not be recorded in any way. The staff member will maintain a record of the telephone or video communication in the same way they maintain records of in-person consultation, in accordance with S-CAPS policies.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

It is our duty to protect your privacy by not revealing the contents of our communication. However, please be aware that there are some circumstances in which a staff member may be required to break confidentiality; the most common scenarios are as follows: to protect you or the public from serious harm; to report abuse or neglect of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities.

Please email this document back to the staff member, along with the signed and dated S-CAPS Phone/Zoom Consult Information Form. Doing so indicates your understanding and agreement with the terms and conditions of these documents. Additionally, please provide the address at which you plan to be during phone or video consultation (the staff member will confirm this address at the beginning of each consultation) as well as the name and phone number of a nearby emergency contact.