

## **AMHERST COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTER INFORMED CONSENT FOR TREATMENT**

Welcome to the Counseling Center. We look forward to assisting you. The Counseling Center clinicians include licensed psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed mental health professionals, psychiatrists, and those supervised by psychologists. You may be meeting with a pre-doctoral psychology trainee, who is completing a placement in the Counseling Center for this academic year. Each trainee practices under the license and supervision of one of the licensed psychologists on staff. In essence, by agreeing to work with a trainee you benefit from the added input on your case that trainees receive in their weekly supervision.

Individual psychotherapy sessions are typically scheduled for 45 minutes and on a weekly or every other weekly basis. At the end of a session, you may schedule the next session for a mutually agreeable time. Please be aware that you might not be able to meet on the same day and time on a consistent basis due to the demand for services. If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, please notify us as soon as possible so we can schedule someone else in the available time period. When needed, we generally communicate by email with clients outside of psychotherapy sessions. Email is not a secure mode of communication. If you are not comfortable with such use of email please discuss this with your clinician.

### **Administrative Neutrality**

The Counseling Center is administratively independent and neutral (i.e. it is not responsible for college admissions, administrative, housing, or disciplinary decisions involving students) and, therefore, your participation here is confidential and voluntary. Information about your contact with the Counseling Center will not be shared with others outside of the Counseling Center without your informed consent, except in specific circumstances described below.

### **Confidentiality**

In accordance with Massachusetts's law, we want to explain to you the meaning of confidentiality and the exceptions to it at the outset of psychotherapy. We ask that you read the information provided here and ask any questions you wish. All sessions with a psychologist, social worker, counselor, psychiatrists and clinicians supervised by psychologists are confidential. The staff members will not give out any information about you to your parents, friends, professors, administrators or others without your permission except in these circumstances:

Counseling Center providers have the discretion to compromise the confidentiality of your communications with them if you threaten to do harm to yourself or another individual and they reasonably believe that you may act on that threat. In such situations, the psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or counselor ordinarily will arrange for you to be evaluated by a psychiatrist or clinician in a hospital setting. It may also be necessary to contact family members or others who can help to provide for your safety. In cases of threats or actual violence toward another, the clinician is legally obliged to take protective actions which may include notifying the potential victim, campus security and/or the police in the potential victim's community. Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors are mandated reporters and are required to breach confidentiality by filing a report with the appropriate state agency if you report to us that a minor (under age 18), elder, or person with a disability is being abused.

Communication during psychotherapy meetings is privileged, meaning that you have a legal right to prevent the clinician from testifying in most judicial hearings, even if a subpoena is issued. Exceptions to this are that a judge may require testimony in certain legal cases where a client has died or if you are involved in a child custody and adoption proceeding, lawsuit in which your mental condition is an important aspect of the case, legal proceeding related to psychiatric hospitalization, malpractice or disciplinary proceeding against the psychologist or social worker, and court ordered psychological evaluation.

### **Treatment of a Minor**

If you are under 18 years of age, your parent or legal guardian must consent to your treatment and the Counseling Center reserves the right to advise your parent(s) or legal guardian about developments which could significantly affect your health or well-being at the College. In such situations, the contents of specific meetings between you and a counselor, social worker or psychologist will not be discussed but your overall progress may be discussed in general terms. Therapists may release certain information without your consent to either your parent (s) or legal authorities under the following circumstances:

- \* You tell your therapist that you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself or someone else, and your therapist believes you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. Your therapist must take steps to inform a parent or guardian of what you have told them and how serious they believe this threat to be; if you intend to harm someone else, your therapist must inform this person.

- \* You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not intend to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, your therapist will need to use their professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.

