

## **EAST GEORGIA COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTER CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Confidentiality is an ethical standard that protects clients from the disclosure of information without their consent. Client contacts with the Counseling Center are confidential. We will not provide information (without your written consent) about clients to friends, partners, faculty, parents, employers, or anyone else outside of those associated with the Counseling Center. Those associated with the Counseling Center are the staff counselors (a Nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Licensed Associate Professional Counselor) and Vice President of Student and Enrollment Services.

The Counseling Center will release information from the counseling sessions to third parties only at the request of the client. The "Authorization For Release of Information" form, signed by the client and a witness, will be used for this purpose. The client must give informed consent and his/her Counselor will discuss, prior to release, the information to be released, to whom, and for what purpose. The client will be advised about the possible effects of disclosure.

There are, however, limited exceptions to this policy. When the Counseling Center believes that a client poses a clear and present danger to himself/herself and/or to others, the Counseling Center may selectively release information, without the client's consent, to aid in the care and protection of the client or endangered others. When the Counseling Center has reasonable cause to suspect that a child (a person under 18 years of age) has been subjected to child maltreatment, which may involve abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation or abandonment, as defined by Georgia law, the Counseling Center may selectively release information, without the client's consent, to aid in the care and protection of a child. The Counseling Center is further required by Georgia law 2103.5 and 2103.6 to report this information to Family and Children's Services.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) provides that student records maintained by physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, or other recognized professionals and para-professionals are not educational records. Therefore, client files do not become part of any permanent record at the College, but are the property of the Counseling Center.

A client's file is maintained at the Counseling Center for a period of seven (7) years from the date of last contact. A client's file is destroyed after this seven (7) year period.

Clients may review their records, in the presence of a Counseling Center staff member, upon written request. The request and fact that a review occurred will be entered in the client's record. Clients may not receive copies of the record or otherwise reproduce it (in part or whole).

The client file of a person who is not a student, including but not limited to, a staff member, faculty member, student's spouse, etc., is not an educational record. The file is accessible to the client unless the Counseling Center believes disclosure would be detrimental to the client's health or well-being.

Georgia law recognizes the privilege that attaches to the counselor-client and psychologist-client relationship. The privilege is extended to only licensed counselors and psychologists. Should the Counseling Center receive a subpoena for client records, the college legal counsel will be consulted prior to taking any action. Clients will be notified in advance, if at all possible, of any compliance with a court order, state or federal law that might require disclosure of client records.

Your signature indicates that you have been provided and read the Confidentiality policy. Please feel free to review or ask questions about the policy when you meet with your counselor.

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Signature Date

**Revised August 15, 2011**