



LATC COUNSELING CENTER GUIDANCE

This guide describes the personal counseling process and procedures used at Lake Area Technical College (LATC). It is a resource for LATC counselors, faculty and staff, clinical interns, and students involved.

MISSION STATEMENT

College Counseling Services supports the college's educational mission by aiding students, faculty, and staff in their wellness by contributing to the growth of the individual, enhancing student retention, and supporting the student's academic and personal success throughout the college experience. College Counseling Services is committed to:

- Providing counseling services with the highest ethical and professional standards
- Promoting an atmosphere encouraging students, faculty, and staff to approach our offices readily.
- Providing outreach, educational, and supportive services to other college divisions.

Policies & Procedures

Each student seeking counseling expects and has the right to a confidential relationship, and the counselor's responsibility is to protect this right. Only with the student's written release can information be disclosed to another party. Each student will receive a copy of the Informed Consent to be signed.

- All communications (including electronic) between counselor and student are confidential in perpetuity.
- For supervision or consultation, LATC counselors may collaborate as part of a consultation designed to enhance the student's care.

Counselors are committed to respecting and valuing student privacy when disclosing student information. They will ensure the student's name or other identifying information is not revealed, maintaining their dignity and worth.

Exceptions to confidentiality include the following:

- If a student discloses plans to harm themselves or someone else, confidentiality cannot be maintained, and steps will be taken to assure safety.
- The protection of a child, an elderly adult, or a (vulnerable) person not competent to protect themselves from physical or sexual abuse or neglect requires a report be made to a legally constituted authority. The counselor must comply with all state and federal statutes concerning mandated reporting.
- If a court subpoenas a student's confidential record, the counselor must legally comply with this court mandate, although exceptions exist.

If a student is under 18, a parent or legal guardian must consent to counseling. LATC Counseling reserves the right to advise parents/guardians about developments that could significantly affect a minor's health or well-being. In such situations, the contents of specific meetings will not be disclosed, but overall progress or concerns may be shared. The exceptions to confidentiality stated above also apply to minors.

Students may be seen for a variety of issues, such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Difficulty with Relationships
- Stress
- Academic Issues
- Substance Use Concerns
- Suicidal Thoughts/Feelings
- Assault or Abuse
- Self-Harm
- Trauma Services
- Support and Referrals for Substance Abuse Issues
- Crisis Intervention
- Psycho-educational Presentations
- Community and Campus Outreach
- Faculty and Staff Consultation

Student Eligibility

Personal counseling is provided for currently enrolled students at no cost, whether they take courses on campus or online. Generally, personal counseling follows a short-term and focused approach, and the work is viewed holistically.

A referral will be made if a student presents significant, complex issues that community resources would better serve.

Counseling Methods

Different counseling modalities are utilized depending on the student's assessment. Student records are updated after each session with notes reflecting the general nature of the session, including psychosocial stressors, current functioning, progress, and counseling interventions.

The length of counseling depends upon the nature of the problem and the degree to which the student seeks change. The counselor and the student collaborate to formulate the best way to proceed. Test anxiety or academic difficulties may involve limited intervention, while complex issues such as interpersonal conflicts may require more. Students who have experienced a significant depression or anxiety disorder may benefit from longer-term counseling. A referral for a medication evaluation or other intensive services may also be needed.

Confidentiality & Informed Consent

Our college counseling services adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards. Our procedures align with the guidelines established for counselors by the American Counseling Association, the National Association of Social Work, and the legal parameters outlined in the State of South Dakota statutes. Your information is confidential, and licensed mental health clinicians securely maintain all records. Confidentiality means that your contact with this office does not go on your academic record and that clinical materials will not be disclosed to any other office or individual unless you have signed a written release for this to occur.

While we uphold strict confidentiality, there are rare instances where we are legally required to disclose information. These include cases of child or elder abuse, potential harm to yourself or others, or as a result of a court order. You need to be aware of these exceptions, even though they are rare.

Our college counseling services are designed to create a safe space to discuss personal concerns, ultimately enhancing your college experience freely. These services are free for all Lake Area Technical College students. Remember, your confidentiality is our top priority. Don't hesitate to contact a counselor for more information or assistance; we are here to support you, and you are not alone in your journey.

Confidentiality of Records

The confidentiality of student counseling records is secured by having these records stored in the Counseling Center in a locked file or kept as secure electronic records. Counseling records are maintained separately and are not part of a student's academic file. They are held for seven years as required by law and then destroyed. Under state regulations, only individual students can review their files, although some exceptions exist. All staff members, including work-study students (if applicable) employed in this area, are informed about confidentiality and the necessity of their adherence to this policy.

For any information to be released, a student must sign an Authorization for the Release of Protected Health Information Form, specifying to whom the information can be released and for what purpose.

Supervision of Graduate Students

In providing clinical supervision to graduate students and post-graduate individuals seeking licensure, an Informed Consent supervision agreement with the supervisee detailing the rights and responsibilities of each party, a straightforward process for resolving differences, accurate and appropriate records of each supervision session, and knowledge of the current licensure requirements will be signed. The supervisee shall regularly attend continuing education and participate in activities regarding topics and skills for both counseling and supervision; make supervisees aware of professional and ethical standards; address the role of multiculturalism and diversity in the supervisory relationship; understand and accept responsibilities to monitor the welfare of clients treated by supervisees; provide supervisees with ongoing performance appraisal and evaluation feedback, as well as formal evaluations; and refrain from endorsing supervisees who fail to meet professional standards of practice.

Referral Process

Personal counseling is generally short-term. Students requiring intensive long-term therapy or who may benefit from psychological evaluations are referred to a community mental health agency for further assessment. The LATC counselor will follow through with the referral to ensure the connection has been made successfully and to support continuity of care (if needed).

A referral may also be made to a Licensed Substance Use Counselor if the student is struggling with a substance use disorder and would benefit from or requests such support. LATC offers Diversion programming to support and educate students about early substance use concerns that can impact their education and personal life.

In cases involving a student in crisis, a referral is made to LATC counselors for assessment. At no time is a staff member to transport a student in need.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Counseling Center hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. LATC counselors are not on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Hours are subject to change based on holidays, the LATC academic calendar, and seasonal hours. These changes will be posted on the Counseling office door.

Counselors are neither first responders nor dispatched off campus to assist in a behavioral health crisis. Students who are unwilling or unable to get to the counseling center during regular business hours or in the event of an after-hours crisis should be directed to use community crisis services such as Prairie Lakes Emergency Room, dial 911, or call the Human Service Agency crisis line (605-886-0123).

**If a significant concern about a student's safety off campus is identified, the Watertown police department may be called to initiate a welfare check.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or comments regarding this policy notice as outlined above, you can contact us at (605) 882-5284 x 337 or x 216

Special Notes about Confidentiality of University Counseling Records

- With certain minimal exceptions, the fact that you come to counseling and the content of your therapy sessions are kept in the strictest of confidence. All Lake Area Technical College counseling records are kept locked and separate from other student records. No one, including the student's parents, Lake Area Tech College administration, or faculty, can be informed about a student's counseling without the student's consent and direction.
- One exception to confidentiality is when a student might present an imminent risk of harm to him or herself or others. The primary duty of a counselor in such situations is to protect the student or others who might be in danger. This requires careful disclosure of information essential to prevent harm. The other exception occurs if a student discloses that a child or older adult has been abused or neglected, which the law mandates must be reported (by South Dakota statute).
- There are state and federal laws that protect the confidentiality of personal information contained in your counseling records. The privacy and security provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") do not cover student counseling records maintained by Lake Area Technical College. We will not release such information without your consent and direction, except by the minimal exceptions provided under applicable laws and regulations.

Authorization to Release Client Information

As the client, you may authorize the release of your information whenever you choose. For example, if you wish to have your counselor communicate with a professor or college administrator (such as the Title IX Coordinator) on your behalf, you can sign a release of information form and provide it to your counselor.

Please note that your counselor will only provide information as you authorize and direct it. Any additional or ongoing disclosures must be prompted by you or expressly directed in writing on your release form.

Required Signature

I acknowledge that I have read and understand ALL of the above information and am fully aware of my rights, benefits, and risks of counseling. I am also aware of limits to confidentiality. If I have any questions or concerns about this information, I agree to discuss these concerns with the counselor.

Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

MH Professional: _____ (witness)