

VMU PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC  
INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES

This document provides the information regarding the free of charge psychological counselling services for VMU community (hereinafter – Clients) at the VMU Psychology Clinic (hereinafter – the Clinic) and is intended at helping you to decide if following conditions are favourable in your case. Before agreeing with the conditions and signing the document, please read the following information carefully and, if you have any questions or concerns, please discuss them with your Counsellor during your first meeting.

**1. The staff of the Clinic**

- 1.1. The counselling services at the Clinic are provided by professional psychologists (hereinafter – Counsellors). Some of the Counsellors are also VMU professors, thus, avoiding the possible conflict of interests, a person who is or will be teaching a course to a Client, is supervising a course work or final theses, or is otherwise related to a Client, can't be assigned as a Counsellor. If a Counsellor unexpectedly becomes a professor for a Client during the course of the ongoing counselling, a Client should discuss the situation with a Counsellor.
- 1.2. A Client has a right to request a change of a Counsellor at any time, after discussing such intention with a Counsellor. A Counsellor can also initiate the discussion on a Client's referral to another Counsellor if a Client's situation exceeds the professional competence of current Counsellor.
- 1.3. If a Client has complaints about a Counsellor's work, he/she has a right to report to the Head of the Clinic.

**2. Initial appointment and referral to other services**

- 2.1. Before the start of the counselling process, the initial appointment is held, where a Client's situation is discussed: a Client is asked to fill in the questionnaires; the concerns, which have brought a Client to the Clinic, other related circumstances as well as the conditions of services are discussed.
- 2.2. If the need for long-term, specialized or other types of the services, which can't be rendered by the Clinic (e.g., medical treatment, psychiatric services, psychotherapy), emerges during the initial appointment or later in the counselling process, a Counsellor discusses the issue with a Client and gives a referral to other appropriate services outside the Clinic. If a Client refuses to accept recommended services or, after the consultations with other professionals, refuses to follow their recommendations, a Counsellor can resign the continuation of the counselling, after discussing the issue with a client.

**3. The counselling process**

- 3.1. Counselling sessions usually take place once a week and last for 50 minutes.
- 3.2. A Client can receive up to 5 sessions (excluding the initial appointment).
- 3.3. If a client is late for the scheduled session, the session time is reduced to the left duration. If a Client is late more than 15 minutes, a Counsellor can ask to reschedule the session for the next week.
- 3.4. A Client should inform about the appointment's cancellation or postponement in advance.
- 3.5. The counselling process is considered as terminated if a Client misses the scheduled session twice without notification.
- 3.6. A Client has a right to terminate the counselling at any time.

**4. Benefits, risks and responsibility**

- 4.1. For most clients the counselling process results in better self knowledge, a better understanding of their values and goals, motives of their behaviour, improvement of interpersonal relationships, changed behaviours, solving specific problems, improvement of emotional state, boosted personal growth.
- 4.2. Nevertheless, the counselling may not always be helpful and lead to improvements. In such cases, a Counsellor discusses with a client the possibilities of other services outside the Clinic. Furthermore, the exploration of problems and hurtful experiences can elevate psychological discomfort, unpleasant memories and emotions. Clients are encouraged to discuss these concerns with their counsellors whenever they may arise in the course of the counselling.
- 4.3. In large part, the effectiveness of the counselling depends on clients' commitment and involvement in the process. Therefore, a Client is expected to work on his/her problem not only in the sessions but also between them.

**5. Confidentiality**

- 5.1. Counsellors follow the standards of professional ethics as well as legal acts and thus usually warrant confidentiality by keeping in secret the information revealed by the clients during the sessions.
- 5.2. There are some exceptional circumstances limiting the confidentiality warranty. They include situations when:
  - a Client articulates or demonstrates the imminent danger of harming oneself or someone else;
  - a Client discloses abuse or neglect of his/her child or children or other people dependent from a Client;
  - there is the issuance of a court order or lawfully issued subpoena for counselling records to be given to the court.
- 5.1. Under these exceptional circumstances, a Counsellor discusses the situation with a client in detail before taking any actions (reporting to appropriate them).

