



Client Information Form and Informed Consent - Consent for Children/Adolescents

Welcome to Lethbridge Counselling Services (LCS)! This document is intended to provide you with information about receiving counselling services with LCS. Please review this information carefully and ask any questions you may have before you sign this consent. If you would like a copy of this form, let your Counsellor know.

Q. What are your qualifications?

A. At Lethbridge Counselling Services, we are pleased to offer the services of Registered Psychologists, Registered Provisional Psychologists, Registered Social Workers and Canadian Certified Counsellors. All of our therapists are health professionals, trained at a master's level and are associated with a professional regulatory body.

Q. What kind of issues can therapy help with?

A. Counselling is a process that focuses on wellness, personal growth, and addressing a variety of specific presenting concerns. The Counsellor's role is to help you work in ways that respect your child's values, personal resources, and capacity for self-determination. Goals for counselling will be informed by you as the parent/guardian(s) and the child collaboratively, and it our hope that we can assist your family in meeting these goals. Your Counsellor can discuss with you their particular areas of practice and specialty, and you can let the know what kinds of support you are looking for your child.

Q. What are the risks and benefits of coming for therapy?

A. There are numerous risks and benefits with coming to counselling. The way your child acts, feels and thinks are affected by coming to counselling. This may be positive or negative. Please discuss these further with your Counsellor and let them know if you have any specific questions or concerns.

Q. What are the responsibilities of the therapist in the counselling process?

A. Your child's Counsellor is responsible for practicing ethically and in line with their own standards of practice for their profession.

Q. What are my responsibilities in coming to therapy?

A. You, as a parent/guardian(s) of a child receiving a client seeking services with Lethbridge Counselling Services, are responsible for:

- Attending sessions as scheduled and letting the Counsellor know if you need to cancel or change an appointment. Please contact your Counsellor directly to advise of cancellations and rescheduling.
- Completing homework as discussed
- Being an active participant in the counselling process
- Not attending the LCS office if you are ill (symptoms consistent with COVID-19), if you are awaiting a COVID-19 test result, or if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 14 days).

Q. Are there alternatives to counselling?

A. There are many ways people may choose to deal with struggles in their life and counselling is definitely one option. Other options may be to talk to your doctor or see a natural health practitioner. Talking with friends and family may also be helpful.

Some presenting concerns, however, are best handled with professional assistance. Not dealing with personal issues can have consequences in the long-run including the problem potentially getting worse and negative impacts on your studies, relationships, or health.

Q. How can I access services?

A. Services are available in person at the LCS office or online via ZOOM (Encrypted Health Care version) to Alberta residents.

Q. What do I need to know about virtual services?

A. If your child is accessing services virtually it requires that you and they have a basic level of comfort with and access to technology and are familiar with programs such as ZOOM and email. It also requires you to be comfortable with having only online / telephone access to a Counsellor, as you will not be meeting with them in-person.

Although research has shown that online counselling is generally not as effective as face-to-face counselling, it is certainly a good option for individuals who would not otherwise access counselling services (due to, for instance, living in an isolated area or having a schedule that would make it difficult to attend counselling at an office).

There are also risks associated with online counselling including pitfalls associated with technology. There may be unplanned service disruptions, lag time in online conversations, and delays in sending and receiving emails. There are also security risks always present with transmitting information online. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the terms of service for the technology being used.

Attending counselling over the computer or telephone is not for everyone. If it is felt that your child would better benefit from another service, a referral may be made. Please note that if you are currently feeling suicidal or homicidal, e-counselling or telephone counselling is not an appropriate service for you. Please contact your local mental health clinic or hospital.

While every effort is made to ensure the safety and security of online counselling material (emails and live chats), vulnerabilities still exist. For instance, it is possible for third parties to intercept email sent between client and counsellor. It is also possible at times to misdirect your email message by failing to pay attention to the address of the person to whom you are writing.

We suggest the following guidelines for the use of email in online counselling:

- Use a personal or home computer - it is safer simply by virtue of the fact that far less people have access to it.
- Avoid sending/receiving emails at wireless (Wi-Fi) hotspots unless you are sure your connection is secure or you are prepared to take the risk.
- Make a point of double checking the 'To' address field prior to clicking 'Send'.
- You may wish to consider requesting a 'return receipt' so that your counsellor acknowledges your email upon receiving it.
- Use a password for access to your computer and email account and log out when you are finished.
- Ensure all security software (such as anti-virus and firewall applications) and system software updates are installed.
- You may also wish to consider encryption of your email.
- If receiving services via telephone, we ask that you call us at the number provided (vs. using calling you) – this reduces the risk of breaching your privacy if someone else answers the phone.

*This section adapted from: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling/online-counselling/online-counselling-benefits-and-risks>

Q. What is in my file?

A. As soon as you fill out the client information form and sign this consent form, a file is created for your child. You have the right to view your client file as long as it does not cause you, or anyone else harm to do so, or for other reasons as outlined by applicable laws. We do ask however, that you waive this right in order to honour your child's privacy. Your Counsellor must keep your file for 10 years from the end of therapy OR 10 years after your child turns 18 years of age, whichever is longer, after which your file will be shredded. Depending on your situation your file may be retained longer. Please discuss this with your therapist if you have questions.

Q. How are files stored?

A. Paper files are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the LCS main office. Your Counsellor is only one with regular access to your file. An extra key to each cabinet is stored in a locked cabinet in case of an emergency (i.e. your Counsellor is ill and unable to see you and another LCS staff needs to reach you to advise of this).

Due to COVID-19, your Counsellor may be working from home at times if providing virtual services. In this case, files are stored in a locked cabinet and are transported securely.

If your child's Counsellor is storing files electronically, then files are stored securely on an encrypted and password protected server and are accessed only by your Counsellor on their personal and password protected device. Your Counsellor will advise of specific details of their file storage. Please be sure to ask if you have any questions.

Q. Can I be friends with my therapist?

A. Your and your child's relationship with the Counsellor is a professional one guided by rules and ethics. As such, your therapist cannot:

- Have a business or personal friendship relationship with you or your child
- Be your child's therapist if you are related
- Be your friend (or your child's friend) on Facebook or any other social media site
- Share their personal email or cell # with you or your child
- Ever have any type of romantic or sexual relationship with you, or with any people close to you
- Be your supervisor, teacher or evaluator
- Receive gifts from you

Q. How private in my child's information?

A. Therapy is most effective when a trusting relationship exists between the Counsellor and the child/adolescent. Privacy is especially important in securing and maintaining that trust. It is often helpful for children to develop a "zone of privacy" where they can feel free to discuss personal matters with their therapist safely without worrying that everything they shared will be passed on to their parents. This is particularly true for adolescents who are naturally developing a greater sense of independence and autonomy.

It is our policy to provide you with general information about treatment status and to raise issues that may impact your child either inside or outside the home. Your child's Counsellor will not, however, share with you specific details of what your child has disclosed to them without your child's consent. Exceptions to this include times when your child may be at risk (i.e. suicide, homicide, high-risk drug use, illegal activity or sexual activity).

Legally and ethically, your child's counsellor must disclose personal information if:

- Your child threatens to do harm or kill themselves or another person.
- They become aware that the child themselves, a dependent adult, a person in care or other vulnerable person has been harmed (past or present), or is in danger of being harmed.
- They receive a court order (subpoena) that makes it so we must release your information/or if the court requires me to testify at a court hearing.
- You are accessing services through an Employee Assistance Plan. In this case, your EAP may have access to information about you including: session dates, if you no-show or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice for an appointment, risk assessment information

should you appear to pose a risk to yourself or another person, the nature of your presenting concern and your case disposition when services are complete.

To further protect your privacy, please be aware:

- Your Counsellor will not greet you or your child outside of the Lethbridge Counselling Services office **unless you greet them first.**

*Please note that Lethbridge Counselling Services Counsellors do share information internally for the purposes of peer consultation and supervision. Only non-identifying information is shared, this is for the purposes of providing you with the best possible service during your time with us.

**Also note that Counsellors at Lethbridge Counselling Services use a shared Outlook calendar system in order to manage bookings, so your child's name and contact information will be visible in the calendar. The other Counsellors on the team along with our Intake Volunteer(s) may see this information. All LCS staff and volunteers have signed an Oath of Confidentiality. Your Counsellor also maintains a mobile Outlook calendar. All Counsellor's mobile devices are password protected.

*** For billing purposes, Counsellors at Lethbridge Counselling Services use a program called Wave Accounting for bookkeeping and billing purposes. This is an internet based application with a secure login. Your name, your child's name and your email address will be stored in this program in order to create invoices for services. No other identifying information is put into this system. If your Counsellor is direct billing your benefits company for services, your benefits provider will have access to appointment dates and the amount billed.

Q. How long does counselling take?

A. The length of counselling (# of sessions) will vary depending on your child's individual issues and needs. This is something you will discuss with your Counsellor in discussing goals for the therapy process.

Q. Is counselling covered by my employee health plan?

A. Many employee/student health plans with extended health benefits may cover all or a portion of counselling services. Each plan is different in terms of the amount of coverage, number of sessions, and qualifications required for the therapist. Check with your Health Benefits Plan Administrator if you are unsure.

Q. How much does counselling cost?

A. The cost per session for this service varies per therapist. Regular non-subsidized fees range between \$80 and \$175 per hour. Your fee will be discussed and set at your first appointment.

Q. Can you direct bill for services?

A. Many of our Counsellors do offer direct billing options through Blue Cross, ASEBP and TELUS e-claims. You can discuss with your therapist what options may be available to you at the time of your first appointment. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure there is adequate coverage for services rendered. If you reach your maximum, or your benefits are exhausted, you are responsible for any amounts left owing.

Q. What if I don't pay?

A. If there is a balance owing for services due to a no-show, insurance non-payment, or other arrangements not honoured by you, your Counsellor reserves the right to contact your insurance company regarding coverage or to send your outstanding account to collections for payment. Non-payment may result in a disruption of services.

Q. What hours do you have available for counselling appointments?

A. Counsellors are available for day and evening appointments. Each Counsellor has their own specific schedule, so please inquire as to your Counsellor's specific availability.

Q. How long is a counselling session?

A. Counselling sessions are generally 50-55 minutes in length, unless previously arranged. Fees for longer sessions will be charged accordingly, and as discussed with your Counsellor.

Q. What if I need to cancel an appointment?

A. All cancellations must be made more than 24 hours in advance of the appointment whenever possible. Failure to cancel within 24 hours or not attending a scheduled appointment (without rescheduling or cancelling) may result in being billed for the missed session. If you are more than 15 minutes late for your scheduled appointment, this is counted as a missed appointment and again, you may be billed. Your Counsellor will be glad to meet with you for the remaining portion of your appointment if you wish.

Q. What if my child is in crisis?

A. During business hours, please call 403-942-0452 or email lethbridgecounselling@gmail.com and your Counsellor may be able to arrange to see your child for an emergency appointment. If your child is in crisis (outside of business hours or if you are not able to reach your Counsellor), contact the Distress Line (403.327.7905), call 911, or attend the emergency room at the Chinook Regional Hospital. Please note that Lethbridge Counselling Services is not a crisis service and cannot guarantee availability of crisis support.

Q. Do you provide child care?

A. No, child care is not provided and children (other than the one being seen for services) cannot be brought to sessions.

Q. What about safety?

A. We ask that you or your child do not attend sessions while under the influence of alcohol or drugs as this negatively impacts both your safety and the safety of your therapist. We also do not allow any aggressive or abusive behaviour directed towards other clients accessing services or towards the therapist (in office, on the phone or by email). LCS is meant to be safe space. If your therapist feels threatened by any action (verbal or physical) made by you or your child, you will be asked to leave and services may be discontinued.

Q. What if I am not happy with my therapy experience?

A. We encourage you to share your concerns with your Counsellor and we can see what we can do to make things better. You also have a right to request a referral to another therapist if you feel like your Counsellor is not the right fit for your child.

If you feel that your Counsellor has acted unethically, you can choose to contact their professional association to file a complaint. Please note that if you choose to do so, your Counsellor will need to share important information about services provided to your child as contained in the file.

Q. How do I know when counselling is finished?

A. Counselling can be discontinued at any time by either the client or the therapist. Ideally though it is joint decision when you as the client feel as though you have met the goals you set for yourself in counselling and no longer require the service.

Consent

This consent is valid from the date it is signed and will expire at the termination of services after which the file will be closed.

You have the right to withdraw this consent at any time, without prejudice, during the course of service delivery. Should you wish to do so, please let your Counsellor know and this will be documented on the file and services will be discontinued.

Parent/Guardian Consent *(please check one)*

Parents are together and share custody and guardianship. Consent from one or both parents is adequate.

Parents are not together and one parent has sole custody and sole guardianship and can only give consent

Parents are not together and share joint custody and guardianship. Consent from both parents is required.

Child is not under care of Parent(s); Legal Guardian providing consent.

Parent/Guardian #1 contact information:

Parent/Guardian #2 contact information:

Name

Name

Address

Address

Telephone/Cell

Telephone/Cell

CONSENTING PARENT/GUARDIAN(S):

I HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS FORM _____ (initial)

A COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN OFFERED TO ME _____ (initial)

I UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS FORM SAYS, AND I HERBY PROVIDE MY INFORMED CONSENT FOR COUNSELLING FOR MY CHILD _____:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS INFORMED CONSENT WITH THE PARENT/GUARDIAN(S) AND THE CHILD _____ (initial)

In my professional opinion the above person(s) appears to understand the information I have presented and there does not appear to be a reason why this person/these persons are not fully competent to give informed consent for their child to participate in the therapy process.

Therapist Signature: _____

Date: _____

Therapist Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of insured member: _____

DOB of Insured Member: _____ (DD/MM/YY)

Limitations of Benefits Coverage (qualifications, amount):

How did you hear about us?

Friend Doctor Another Counsellor Family Member

Internet Search Facebook Yellow Pages Other

Anything else you would like us to know?

