



## Informed Consent Policy

### Introduction

Flourish Counselling & Psychotherapy is committed to ensuring that clients are fully informed about the counselling process, their rights, and the nature of the services provided. This policy outlines how we obtain and document informed consent from clients.

### Scope

This policy applies to all clients, counsellors, administrative staff, and any individuals associated with Flourish Counselling & Psychotherapy.

### Definition of Informed Consent

Informed consent is a voluntary agreement by a client, based on an understanding of the nature, benefits, risks, and alternatives of the counselling services offered. It requires that clients be provided with all necessary information to make an informed decision about their participation in counselling with us.

### Elements of Informed Consent

Information Disclosure: Clients will be provided with comprehensive information about the counselling process, including:

- The nature and purpose of counselling
- The qualifications and experience of the counsellor
- The expected duration and frequency of sessions
- Potential benefits and risks associated with counselling
- Confidentiality and its limits
- Fees and payment policies
- The client's rights and responsibilities

Comprehension: It will be ensured that clients fully understand the information provided. Counsellors will take the time to answer any questions and clarify any doubts the client may have.

Voluntariness: Clients must give their consent voluntarily, without any form of coercion, pressure, or undue influence.

### Procedure for Obtaining Informed Consent

**Initial Consultation:** During the initial consultation, the counsellor will explain the informed consent process and provide the client with an informed consent form.

**Written Consent:** Clients will be required to read, understand, and sign the informed consent form before commencing counselling. The signed form will be kept in the client's file as a record of their consent. This may be a hard copy or an electronic copy. Flourish Counselling & Psychotherapy aims to contribute to a greener practice by minimising the use of paper where possible.

**Ongoing Consent:** Informed consent is an ongoing process. Clients will be informed of any significant changes to the counselling process, and their consent will be reaffirmed as necessary.

#### **Additional Considerations**

**Consent for Specific Modalities or Assessments:** If specific interventions such as EFT, somatic work, or psychological assessments for third-party agencies are offered, the counsellor will explain the nature of each intervention and obtain additional consent as required.

**Privacy and Record Keeping:** Client records are maintained securely by ethical and legal standards. Records may be stored electronically or in physical form, with access restricted to authorised personnel. Clients may request access to their records at any time, and records are retained for the period required by relevant legislation.

**Communication Preferences and Digital Communication:** Clients will be asked to indicate their preferred method of communication (e.g., phone, email, SMS). They will also be informed of any risks associated with digital communication and supported to make a choice that aligns with their comfort and privacy needs.

#### **Consent Involving Minors or External Agencies:**

- When counselling is provided to a minor, informed consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian.
- In cases involving joint custody or legal complexity, counsellors may request confirmation of legal authority to consent.
- Where relevant, and with client or guardian permission, information may be shared with external parties (e.g., schools, NDIS) in line with confidentiality and privacy obligations.

#### **Exceptions**

In certain situations, obtaining written informed consent may not be possible (e.g., emergency situations). In such cases, verbal consent will be obtained and documented in the client's file.

#### **Client Rights**

**Right to Withdraw:** Clients have the right to withdraw their consent and discontinue counselling at any time, without any negative repercussions.

**Right to Information:** Clients have the right to receive accurate and complete information about the counselling services and their rights.

#### **Review and Updates**

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary to ensure it remains compliant with legal and ethical standards.

#### **Contact Information**

For any questions or concerns regarding this informed consent policy, please contact:

Flourish Counselling & Psychotherapy at: [flourishcounselling@outlook.com.au](mailto:flourishcounselling@outlook.com.au).

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