ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

MATCHING COUNSELING NEEDS AND RESOURCES

• In your first appointment, you and your counselor will discuss the concerns that have brought you to counseling.
• The counselor will ask about your mental health history and any previous counseling experiences you have had. You and your counselor may also talk briefly about your family and your experience here at Luther.
• It will be important for you and your counselor to identify goal areas to work toward. Examples may include; increasing positive coping skills to manage anxiety: decreasing suicidal ideation, etc.
• If it appears that you will need more intensive, specialized, or longer term counseling than we can provide, the counselor will recommend referral to an off campus mental health professional.

APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING

• You and your counselor will determine how often you will meet, in some situations you may meet more frequently at first and then move toward seeing your counselor less often.
• Typically you can expect to meet with your counselor for approximately, 50 minute sessions.
• It is highly important that you come regularly for appointments if counseling is to be helpful to you.
• If you have an unworkable conflict with your appointment time, please call or email in advance (at least by the preceding day) to cancel and reschedule. You do not have a standing appointment. To see your counselor again after a missed or canceled appointment, you need to reschedule with our administrative assistant by calling (563-387-1375) or emailing (counseling@luther.edu). NOTE: Repeated late cancelations or missed appointments may lead to loss of eligibility for counseling.

Luther College Counseling Service repeated late cancelations, missed appointments or failure to cancel policy:

1. It is important that you attend scheduled appointments as we are saving the appointment hour specifically for you. If an unavoidable conflict occurs, please cancel the appointment by the end of the business day (5 p.m.) preceding the day on which the appointment is scheduled (not the same day).
2. If you cancel late (same day as appointment) or fail to show, this will count toward our limit of 3 late cancellations or failures to show. (Unless significant illness or other truly unavoidable late conflict.)
3. After a third late cancellation or failure to show, you will have to go to same day scheduling. This means you must call the Counseling Service on a day you want to come in and if the counselor has an open appointment hour that works, the counselor will see you. If not, you will have to call again for a same-day appointment or you may choose to go on to our waiting list.
4. If the counselor has clinical concerns about moving you to same-day scheduling, the counselor will discuss this with the director of counseling and they will decide together how to proceed.

5. Counseling service reserves the right to allow fewer than three failure to show or late cancellations of an intake appointment.

6. If you would like a referral for other on or off campus resources, please contact us or student life office.

THE COUNSELING PROCESS

Our counseling work with clients might best be described as professionally coached self-change. After exploring your current life situation and the changes you would like to make, you and your counselor will jointly develop goals for counseling and discuss how you can best achieve those goals. Counseling is not like a visit to a medical doctor, where you might receive a diagnosis and prescribed treatment carried out entirely by your physician. Counseling is a collaborative process that requires a very active effort on your part and a significant commitment of your time and energy. To reach your goals, you will have important work to do both during sessions and between sessions. Counseling can have benefits and risks. Since counseling often involves discussing difficult or painful aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, fear, or frustration. On the other hand, research suggests counseling is often beneficial. Counseling can lead to solutions to specific problems, significant reductions in feelings of distress, better relationships, and other life changes. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

COUNSELING RECORDS

You will have an electronic counseling record that will contain your intake materials, notes by your counselor about the work you are doing together, and other counseling related materials. Electronic counseling records are stored on a secure server dedicated to Counseling and have several levels of security protection. Only Counseling staff members will have access to your electronic record. Your record will be deleted eight years after the academic year in which your last counseling appointment occurred.

CLIENT RIGHTS

As a client, you should be aware that you have the following rights:

- To ask questions about your counselor’s professional qualifications, experience, and approaches to working with clients and about the goals and nature of counseling
- To be an active participant in decisions about counseling goals and strategies and to refuse any goals or strategies with which you do not agree
• To have your counseling experience remain confidential, within certain limits (see Policy on Confidentiality)
• To end counseling at any time

CRISIS SITUATIONS

The issues for which students seek counseling sometimes involve considerable stress and intense painful feelings. If you should feel that you need assistance before your next (or first) scheduled appointment, you may take one of following steps:

Weekdays, 8 am to 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00 pm

• Contact your counselor at the Counseling Service (563-387-1375). If your counselor is out of the office, another counselor can talk with you.

Nights/weekends

• Counselors do not maintain a formal “on call” schedule for emergency coverage after office hours. You may not be able to reach your counselor quickly. Contact one of the following resources for emergency assistance. Hall staff or Security will contact a counselor in accordance with emergency protocols.

Contact:

• Your RA
• Your hall director
• Campus Security (563-387-2111)

Go directly to:

• Winneshiek Medical Center Emergency Room, 901 Montgomery St., Decorah, 563-382-2911

Call a 24-hour crisis line:

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)
• Northeast Iowa Behavioral Health Center at 382-3649 or 1-800-400-8923

For more information, see Crisis Resources http://www.luther.edu/counseling/crisis/

ENDING COUNSELING

The best time to end counseling is when you and your counselor agree that you have reached your goals and that the issues for which you sought counseling are well on their way to resolution. If you have concerns about your counseling experience, please discuss them with your counselor rather than
dropping out of counseling. The chances are good that you and your counselor can work out your concerns about the counseling process.

If you have a serious concern that you do not feel able to raise with your counselor, you may bring it to Meg Hammes, Director of Counseling, or to Corey Landstrom, Dean for Student Life (563-387-1020). Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of the complaint.

E-MAIL: counseling@luther.edu

- If you need to reschedule an appointment, you may e-mail us (or call 563-387-1375). However, we strongly prefer that you handle all discussion of counseling issues via phone or face-to-face contact with us.
- If you need night/weekend emergency help, contact one of the previously cited crisis resources. We do not maintain 24-hour access to e-mail. The counselors are sometimes out of the office on weekdays.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

It is the practice of Counseling staff members to not accept contact or “friend” requests from clients on social networking sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn. They can compromise your privacy and also complicate our helping relationship.