

# Mental Health Counseling

## Scope of Practice

The Dale Montgomery Counseling & Wellness Center (CWC) offers free counseling and career counseling to students whose concerns fall within the following scope of practice and who reside in the state of Arkansas. Eligible students include individuals enrolled in at least 1 credit hour that require the student to pay the usual tuition and student service fee. This includes students enrolled in any academic or workforce course, who may or may not be seeking a degree and/or certificate. Early College Enrollment (ECE) students are also eligible for counseling services and can find the intake process [here](#).

Students can make appointments by calling the clinic at 479-619-4128 or emailing [counseling@nwacc.edu](mailto:counseling@nwacc.edu).

Counseling is available by appointment only. If you have an emergency, please utilize one of the following options:

- \*Call Campus Police: 479-619-4229
- \*Call 911
- \*The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 by calling 988
- \*Go to the nearest Emergency Room

Individual or couples' counseling includes therapeutic assessment and treatment of mental health concerns. Treatment may be intermittent depending on which semester (s) you are enrolled at NWACC. For example, you may start counseling in the fall or spring but take the summer off from classes. In that situation, therapy would stop and resume when the student reenrolled in classes for the fall semester.

Appointments are typically scheduled every two weeks. Clinicians work collaboratively with students to determine an appropriate plan and length for treatment. To serve as many students as possible, the CWC focuses on developing a plan to meet goals that can be accomplished within a brief therapy model used in the service of long-term support for the length of your academic career at NWACC.

Counseling groups are another form of services available to currently enrolled students and if appropriate, may allow longer term contact with the CWC. Group sessions may be topic or theme based and are typically scheduled weekly. Group leaders require brief consultations with all interested individuals to determine appropriateness for participation, considering factors such as group composition, client readiness, and presenting concerns.

All sessions are confidential as outlined in our Informed Consent paperwork, with a few exceptions:

(1) if a licensed mental health professional from NWACC Counseling & Wellness believes the client is likely to seriously harm themselves or act on suicidal ideation

(2) if a licensed mental health professional from NWACC Counseling & Wellness believes the client is likely to harm another person

(3) if a licensed mental health professional from NWACC Counseling & Wellness has cause to believe that the client, another minor, an elderly person, or a person with a disability may be abused, neglected, or subjected to financial exploitation

(4) if records are requested by a valid subpoena or court order

Concerns commonly treated include, but not limited to:

- Academic-related issues: difficulty with attention, motivation, perfectionism, test anxiety, or self-management
- Adjustment problems: difficulty with transitions or new life circumstances
- Relationship problems: break-ups, interpersonal conflict, communication and assertiveness, family issues
- Mood or anxiety issues: depression, general or social anxiety, body image issues, low self-esteem
- Misuse or mild abuse of substances
- Grief and loss
- Developmental/identity concerns: exploration or support needed focused on racial, cultural, spiritual, sexual and/or gender identities, and/or related to being a first-generation college student or international student
- Coping with trauma: sexual assault, interpersonal violence, racial trauma, etc.

### **Crisis Intervention**

Urgent appointments are available Monday through Friday from 8am to 4:30pm for students experiencing thoughts of harm to self or others or who have recently experienced a traumatic event. The purpose of urgent appointments is to provide immediate support, assess safety concerns, and discuss needs for ongoing treatment. Multiple crisis resources are available during non-business hours and can be found at the [Counseling Center](#) website.

Concerns appropriate for use of urgent appointments include recent:

- Thoughts, attempt(s), plan, or intent to die by suicide
- Thoughts of wanting to physically harm others
- Sexual or physical assault
- Death or terminal diagnosis of a loved one
- Emergence of psychotic symptoms and/or mania

Urgent appointments are not intended for:

- Supplemental support between regularly scheduled sessions.
- Support around break-ups or other interpersonal conflicts when there is no threat to immediate safety.
- Psychiatric hospitalization discharge. Staff at treating hospitals should work with students to connect with the appropriate level of post-hospitalization care. This after care typically does not include the short-term counseling provided by the CWC.

### **Reasons for Referral Outside of the Counseling Center**

Often, students benefit from more frequent services, longer-term care, more intensive services, care beyond enrollment at the college, and/or services that extend beyond the end of academic semesters. Those needs which cannot be thoroughly or ethically served within our Center will be referred to community resources for care. Referrals might occur immediately following the initial assessment or at any time during the treatment process based on assessed needs. Referral assistance is available to help students connect to providers or resources outside of our Center.

Clinical issues that will likely be addressed through a community referral include, but not limited to:

- Assessed need or request for long-term treatment or frequency of sessions that exceeds the clinic's capacity to serve
- Assessment that short-term services would not be adequate or appropriate for treatment of presenting concern(s)
- Reliance on crisis intervention services, indicating need for more frequent sessions
- Chronic mental health conditions that require specialized care that exceeds the Counseling Center's ability to provide including:
  - active eating disorders
  - significant history of or ongoing substance abuse
  - severe symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder, as assessed by the Counseling Center
  - severe symptoms consistent with obsessive-compulsive disorder, as assessed by the Counseling Center
  - severe symptoms consistent with bipolar disorder, as assessed by the Counseling Center
  - psychotic symptoms with elevated risk of progressive deterioration
  - history of longstanding, maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, which indicate short-term therapy may be ineffective and/or detrimental
  - chronic suicidality and/or recent history of suicide attempt(s)
  - severe and chronic self-injury
  - history of extensive prior therapy in this or another setting
  - history of multiple psychiatric hospitalizations with ongoing risk of harm to self or others

- history of violence or destructive behavior, behaviors that indicate characteristic violent patterns, destructive potential evident, and/or contact with police because of violent or destructive behavior
- organic disorders (e.g., head injury, stroke) affecting client's use of talk therapy

Other reasons students may be referred to community resources include, but not limited to:

- Unwillingness to complete client data entry or provide information sufficient for clinical assessment
- Inability to identify a treatment goal appropriate for a brief counseling model
- Inconsistent attendance (clients are provided the center's attendance policy)
- Poor compliance or engagement with treatment recommendations
- Ongoing treatment relationship with another mental health provider
- Inappropriate behaviors towards any Center staff or within the Counseling Center
- Mandated or required treatment, including but not limited to:
- Counseling ordered through legal or conduct proceedings, such as substance abuse treatment, alcohol education, anger management, parenting education, or domestic violence treatment
- Counseling required by external entities, such as employers, government agencies, or campus departments/classes
- Comprehensive psychological evaluation of any type, including, but not limited to:
  - Psychoeducational (ADHD, LD) or neuropsychological evaluations
  - Custody or other forensic assessments/evaluations
  - Assessment and documentation for emotional support animals
  - Assessment for State/Federal benefit programs, including social security/disability
  - Fitness-for-duty evaluations
  - Pre-surgical mental health evaluations
- Inflexible (or inappropriate) requests for specific counselor, counselor characteristics, or extremely limited/rigid schedule
- No staff expertise in the area of the client's concern (e.g., head injury, organic disorder, language processing concerns, etc.)
- Lack of available appointments, which tends to occur toward the end of academic semesters
- Any situations in which a clinician, in consultation with Center Leadership, determines that treatment within the Counseling Center would not be beneficial for the student, disrupt functioning of the Center, and/or pose a risk to the NWACC campus

### **Scope of Practice Questions**

Thank you for reviewing this document. We ask for your understanding that the Counseling Center is working to provide the most appropriate services possible for our students and campus community while managing available resources.

Questions about this Scope of Practice may be directed to the Counseling Center by email [counseling@nwacc.edu](mailto:counseling@nwacc.edu) or by calling the Counseling Center 479-619-4128. Please note that confidential information should not be sent via email.