Welcome to PACS. This document contains important information about our professional services and policies. The Board of Mental Health Practice and the Board of Psychology regulations require all licensed mental health professionals to provide clients certain basic information. Also, to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, we are providing additional important information about PACS for your review and agreement. Please read it carefully and discuss any questions you have with your counselor. Your signature below indicates consent for treatment and agreement with the terms described in this document.

Our staff is here to assist you with the challenges and emotional concerns that may arise while you are at UNH. A variety of services are provided to UNH students who are enrolled in full-time study. Some students benefit greatly from the initial meeting and decide that nothing further is needed. Some students are referred to individual therapy or couples therapy, while others are referred to groups and workshops. Our short-term service model is tailored to meet the needs of students and, as such, we also provide consultation and referral services to students who would be better served in long-term treatment off-campus.

**Initial Consultation:** The purpose of this meeting is to assess your concerns and determine how your needs can best be met. Your completion of the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) helps us to do so. A counselor will help you define your goals and guide you toward the resources available to you achieve these goals, both on and off campus.

**Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment:** We will discuss with you our diagnostic impressions and proposed treatment plan. The decision to pursue psychotherapy, or not to, can have benefits and risks. Since therapy can involve discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, and anxiety can arise. However, most people report benefiting. We cannot guarantee what you will experience. Please ask your counselor if you are interested in learning more about alternative services to those offered at PACS.

**Hours:** During the academic year, PACS is open 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and 8 a.m. - 8p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. For after-hours emergency services, students in crisis may call 862-2090/TTY: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH) and have the call forwarded to speak with someone from the Center for Behavioral Health at Portsmouth Regional Hospital. In-person evaluations after hours are conducted at Portsmouth Hospital in the ER by on-call clinicians of the Center for Behavioral Health; students and/or their insurance companies are billed for these face-to-face evaluations. Students transported to the ER by ambulance will be financially responsible for those services.

All services are limited or unavailable during breaks and any other times that residence halls are closed. When the University curtails operations due to extreme weather, PACS will be curtailed as well. If you have any questions about these limitations, please ask your counselor.

**If there is a life threatening emergency, please call 9-1-1**

**Cancellation Policy:** Once your appointment is scheduled, you are expected to attend your appointment or cancel it 24 hours in advance. PACS reserves the right to discontinue services to clients who cancel two consecutive appointments or who fail to attend two appointments within one semester.

**Confidentiality:** Under New Hampshire law, communications between a client and psychotherapist are privileged (confidential) and may not be disclosed without the specific authorization of the client except under specific, limited circumstances:

- If your counselor believes that your safety or that of others is at risk, it is our legal and ethical responsibility to act to keep you or others safe. This may necessitate the release of confidential information.
• New Hampshire laws require psychotherapists to report the following: hazing, suspicion of child abuse, neglect or exploitation, abuse of an incapacitated adult, opioid abuse by a parent or guardian in a home where minor age children are present; or a “serious threat of physical violence” to a person or property.

• Your counseling records, or portions of them, may be released if a court orders PACS to do so.

• In group therapy, unlike individual treatment, confidentiality is not privileged, and therefore is not protected by law. However, group members are screened prior to the start of the group and must sign and abide by a written confidentiality agreement prior to participating in the group.

• In couples therapy treatment records of couples’ sessions contain information about each person. Both clients should be aware that either person has a right to obtain treatment records. If one client requests the records, it is our policy to notify the other member of the couple and to afford that individual an opportunity to receive a copy of the records as well.

• In order to provide adequate, coordinated care, information is shared between clinicians on the staff or with other professional health care providers on campus; Health & Wellness, including Living Well Services, and Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP).

• As part of maintaining a license to practice, clinicians are required to regularly discuss cases with colleagues. We must also obtain formal supervision on certain cases when necessary. In these situations, we do not disclose the identity of the client, and all colleagues and office staff are legally bound by confidentiality as well.

• PACS is accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc., and our files may be reviewed by our IACS site visitors as part of our quality review process.

• **FOR MATURE MINORS:** If you are under the age of 18, we cannot treat you without parental consent. Parental control over your treatment includes their right to access and release your medical records. For therapy to be effective, we generally counsel parents to let their mature minor be the one to provide information about their treatment. Under very limited circumstances, a minor may prevent parental access to treatment records through a court hearing. In the event you object to a parent having access to your treatment records, you are encouraged to raise this issue with your counselor and with the other parent or with a guardian ad litem if one has been appointed. Upon turning 18, the client gains control over treatment information and records.

We are accountable for our work with you. If you have concerns about your counselor or your treatment, we encourage you to discuss them first with your counselor. You may also talk with the Director of PACS or the Dean of Student Life. You also have the right to contact the New Hampshire Board of Mental Health Practice (603-271-6762) or the New Hampshire Board of Psychology (603-271-2152).

**Licensing, Code of Ethics, and Mental Health Bill of Rights:** All clinicians are governed by Codes of Ethics of their respective Boards under State of New Hampshire law and post their license(s) in their offices. Interns and Fellows operate under the licensure of their supervisors. Copies of these Codes of Ethics are available at the front desk if requested. Pursuant to the New Hampshire Mental Health Bill of Rights, clients have certain rights. A copy of the Mental Health Bill of Rights is posted in the waiting area for your review and you may also request a copy. Please let your counselor know if you have any questions.

**Professional Records:** We keep a record of all services provided. Records are stored in an electronic format and managed electronically. We strive to protect the security of our records and maintain practices in accordance with federal and state protection guidelines. We use appropriate firewall protection, data encryption and password protection to insure the privacy of your record. You also may ask us to correct that record if you find it to be in error. We will not disclose your record to others unless you direct us to do so, or unless the law authorizes or compels us to do so (see Confidentiality above). You may review and receive a copy of your record in electronic or hardcopy version and may obtain more information about it by asking your counselor or the Director of PACS.

**Professional Boundaries:** PACS clinicians are obligated to maintain appropriate boundaries with current and past clients and in some cases clients’ family members. Friendships, sexual relationships and sexual contact between therapist and client (or former client) are all prohibited by the policies of PACS and the University of New Hampshire and are deemed
inappropriate by the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Workers.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The UNH community is a small one. Occasionally, conflicts of interest may arise. If your counselor becomes aware of a conflict in providing treatment to you, they may refer you to another therapist. Regardless of the existence of a conflict of interest, you can be assured that any information you disclose will remain confidential.

**Our providers:** Our clinicians include licensed psychologists, licensed social workers, pre-doctoral psychology interns, post-doctoral psychology fellows, and a part-time licensed psychiatrist. Our psychology interns and post-doctoral fellows are in the last stages of their training toward licensure, are supervised by the licensed staff. In order to provide adequate, coordinated care, information may be shared between your counselor and the staff at Health & Wellness, including the medical staff and the nutritionist, and SHARPP.

**Consent to record:** To facilitate the training and supervision of our interns and post-doctoral fellows we would like to ask if your appointment is with an intern or a post-doctoral fellow that you allow your session(s) to be videotaped. No recordings will be made without your prior knowledge and written consent. Any supervisor who views the recordings is bound by the laws that protect your confidentiality.

Session recordings at PACS are done with webcams. It is our policy that recordings are only viewed at PACS, never remotely, and are erased as soon as they are no longer needed. Sessions are password-protected and saved in an encrypted format. The computer network at PACS has been set up behind rigorous, HIPAA-compliant firewalls, and campus IT has assured the security of these files.

As with therapy itself, there are benefits and risks associated with recording. Session recording provides you and your counselor the benefit of enhanced quality control and specific feedback from other PACS clinicians, which would not be done as easily without session recording. Many clients experience an initial hesitation or self-consciousness, but most people find that this diminishes fairly quickly.

Even though session recording has real benefits to your counselor and to you, you have the right to refuse recording without penalty or change to your access to services. The permission you provide now may be rescinded at any time in the future.

_____ Initial if you agree for your session(s) to be recorded

_____ Initial if you decline for your session(s) to be recorded

**Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy:** The PACS staff does not engage with current or former clients on any social media platforms. Until confidentiality can be assured through a secured service, counselors do not respond to e-mail communications from current or former clients.

**Consent to receive text messages:** Psychological and Counseling Services would like to send you text appointment reminders for all of your appointments including individual and group therapy and psychiatric medication appointments and possibly requests for you to call us. You are responsible for keeping or cancelling all of your appointments whether or not you receive a text. Our text appointment reminders will include the date and time of your appointment and the PACS phone number but not your psychologist’s or counselor’s name. Requests for a call back will include the PACS phone number and a statement asking you to call PACS. Depending on your mobile plan, texts from PACS may incur a charge on your monthly bill. Some cellular bills may include a listing of phone numbers for texts received that month. If you prefer not to receive texts, you will not receive any appointment reminder or requests to contact our office.

_____ YES, please text me

_____ NO, do not text me

Last edited 8/13/2018
My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the preceding information regarding certain policies of the UNH Psychological and Counseling Services and that I agree to abide by its terms. I also understand that I can obtain more information about those and other policies from my counselor or the Director of Psychological and Counseling Services. By signing below, I voluntarily consent to treatment in accordance with this agreement.

____________________________________________________
Client Signature

____________________________________________________
Print Name

____________________________________________________
Parent or Legal Guardian Signature (if client is under age 18)

Copies of our Privacy Practices are available upon request and a copy is posted in our lobby.

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