

The Counseling Center Policy & Procedures

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# MISSION STATEMENTS

**Counseling Mission:**

In support of the mission of Thomas More University providing academic excellence within a values based environment, the Counseling Center exists to support the body, mind and spirit of all members of its community. It is our commitment to provide comprehensive clinical/developmental counseling in a safe and welcoming environment including outreach, prevention and consultative relationships across campus.

**Student Affairs Mission:** *The Counseling Center is part of Student Affairs.*

Student Affairs provides quality co-curricular programs and services that promote holistic wellness, lifelong learning and global citizenship.

# COUNSELING CENTER SERVICES

**Statement of Services**

The goal of The Counseling Center is to work collaboratively with students, academic departments, individual faculty members, student services, and other pertinent departments of the University to enhance students’ academic, personal, and career success. Beginning in January 2019, The Counseling Center is partnered with St. Elizabeth Physicians Behavioral Health for the provision of all therapeutic services.

The Counseling Center provides a professional, confidential, and supportive setting to address the psychological, emotional, and developmental needs of student as they pursue their academic goals.

Professional mental health providers offer non-intensive services to all enrolled students at Thomas More University during the academic school year. There is no charge for these services. During the summer, students may continue services with their current provider but sessions will occur at St. Elizabeth Physicians Behavioral Health office in Crestview Hills and the student’s insurance will be billed. Students needing intensive services are referred to community mental health resources.

Counselors will not see faculty and staff for counseling sessions, however, will provide referrals for outside services as needed. The Counseling Center does not offer court-mandated or forensically oriented services.

# Description of Services

* Individual Counseling – Counselors can assist with a wide variety of personal difficulties, such as adjusting to college life, academic difficulties, lack of motivation, feeling anxious, stressed, depressed or lonely, relationship problems, gender identity, sexual orientation, coping with grief or anger, lacking confidence or self-esteem, family problems, career and life choices, and stress management.
* Mental Health & Wellness Brochures
* Crisis Intervention
* Referrals
* Workshops and Programs for the Campus Community

# Eligibility, Cost, and Limitations of Services

All currently enrolled TMU students are eligible for personal counseling services at the Counseling Center. There are no fees for these services from the first day of classes in the fall semester to the last day of exams in the spring semester. Students may continue individual counseling services through the summer with their current provider but insurance will be billed. Summer sessions will take place at St. Elizabeth Physicians Behavioral Health in Crestview Hills. Ordinarily, only students currently enrolled at TMU are eligible for personal counseling. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the clinical staff for the following reasons:

* Non-students may secondarily participate in counseling services when it is clinically indicated to involve them in treatment of a TMU student who is the primary student.
* Referrals may be provided to faculty and staff.

We reserve the right to discontinue or limit services if provision of services would create a breach of professional ethics (e.g. inappropriate dual role). If the clinical staff determines that longer-term or specialized care would be more appropriate, the counselor will assist the client by making a referral to other mental health services.

# Refusal of Services

Situations in which TMU Counseling Center may refuse treatment:

* Ongoing treatment for a student who presents as an imminent danger to self or others (e.g., a student who is determined to kill themselves and has a feasible plan to do so; or a student who is experiencing hallucinations and is unable to care for themselves).
* Court-ordered or forensically oriented treatment. (e.g., substance abuse treatment, treatment for criminal behavior such as rape or pedophilia, etc.)
* Treatment that falls beyond our areas of expertise or outside the scope of services provided by this facility.
* Treatment for a student who seeks counseling but nevertheless is fundamentally unwilling to address the disorder in question (e.g., a student who is addicted to cocaine, but adamantly refuses to consider curbing or receive treatment for their drug use).
* Treatment for a student whose behavior creates a hostile working environment at the Counseling Center office, affecting staff and/or other students (e.g., a student who is grossly verbally abusive towards and/or threatens staff).
* Treatment for a student who has been appropriately referred for specialized services but has failed to follow-through.
* Other situations that are determined to be outside the scope of services provided by the TMU Counseling Center or in which case the clinical staff member determines that treatment would be detrimental to the client or to the proper functioning of this facility
* Every effort will be made to refer students we are not able to serve to the appropriate treatment agency or another qualified professional.

# HOURS OF OPERATION

Counseling services are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM (exceptions will be provided based on circumstance) from the first day of classes in the fall semester to the last day of exams in the spring semester. Enrolled students are eligible to continue services through the summer with St. Elizabeth Physicians Behavioral Health but insurance will be billed.

Appointments are recommended for all counseling sessions to be sure a counselor is available. Walk-Ins will be seen on a first come, first serve basis, if a counselor is available. A counselor can be reached by phone, email, or in-person contact. Counseling appointments are made in one-hour increments.

After hours and weekends: Students are instructed to contact campus safety (859)341-4867, 911 or nearest ER if there is an emergency.

Campus Safety will make contact with the counseling staff, if necessary to assist in determining necessary resources and providing guidance as needed.

**24 hour local crisis assistance:**

SUN Behavioral Health: 859-429-5188

North Key: (859) 331-3292

Talbert House: 513-281-CARE (2273)

Women’s Crisis Center NKY Hotline: 800-928-3335

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK), 513-281-CARE (2273)

# CONFIDENTIALITY

Counseling is a confidential process designed to help address your concerns, come to a greater understanding of yourself, and learn effective personal and interpersonal coping strategies. It involves a relationship between you and a trained counselor to help you accomplish your individual goals.

The counseling staff makes your privacy their highest priority. As required by the federal and state laws, ethical standards, as well as our personal commitment to you, every interaction with a Thomas More University counselor is strictly confidential. No record of counseling is contained in any academic, educational, or job placement file. You may request in writing that the counseling staff release specific information about your counseling to persons you designate.

The law states there are some major exceptions to this general rule:

* When there is serious suspicion of physical and/or sexual abuse of children, persons with disabilities or senior citizens
* Imminent danger or serious harm to yourself or others
* By court order
* When you request by means of assigned release that information could be revealed to other individuals or agencies

For these issues, Thomas More University counselors are legally and ethically required to break confidentiality and involve other appropriate individuals. In addition, the counseling staff works as a team. Your counselor may consult with other counseling staff to provide the best possible care.

# CODE OF ETHICS

Counseling Center professionals are guided by the ethical standard of their respective professions, including but not limited to the following:

* American Counseling Association (ACA)
* American Psychological Association (APA)
* National Association for Social Workers (NASW)

Counselors are responsible for understanding and complying with the ethical standards of their profession.

# CRISIS INTERVENTION

Crisis intervention is a service offered to students who are in serious or immediate emotional distress. Counseling staff are available to handle emergencies such as suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, reports of rape or attempted rape, physical assaults, and other types of crises. Students in a crisis can visit or call The Counseling Center during regular business hours at 859-344-3521. Students can contact Campus Safety at 859-341-4867 during regular business hours as well as after hours during the week or on weekends. In the case of an emergency that requires immediate response students should contact 911.

# Screening for Admission to a Hospital

A person is a clear and present danger to himself/herself/others if:

* The person has inflicted serious bodily injury on himself/herself or has attempted suicide or serious self-injury and there is a reasonable probability that such conduct will be repeated if admission is not ordered; or
* The person has threatened to inflict serious bodily injury on himself/herself and there is a reasonable probability that such conduct will occur if admission is not ordered; or
* The person's behavior demonstrates that he/she so lacks the capacity to care for his/her own welfare that there is a reasonable probability of death, serious bodily injury, or serious physical or mental debilitation if admission is not ordered; or
* The person has inflicted, attempted to inflict, or threatened to inflict serious bodily harm on another, and there is a reasonable probability that such conduct will occur if admission is not ordered

# Procedures for Emergency during Counseling Center hours (Monday-Friday 8:00am- 4:30pm)

1. Consult with Counseling Staff member when possible
2. If a student is determined to be in need of psychiatric evaluation Counseling Center staff, Campus Safety, Dean of Students, or other pertinent TMU staff will coordinate transportation for psychiatric evaluation. In some cases, transportation may be arranged to take the student directly to an inpatient psychiatric facility. In most cases, an ambulance will be arranged at the expense of the student to transport the student to the nearest emergency room.

# Procedure for After Hours Emergency (Monday-Friday 4:30pm-8:00am, Saturday, Sunday)

1. Students are instructed to contact campus safety (859)341-4867, 911 or nearest ER if there is an emergency.
2. Campus Safety will make contact with the counseling staff, if necessary to assist in determining necessary resources and providing guidance as needed.
3. If hospital evaluation is needed, pertinent TMU staff will assist with coordinating transportation which may include an ambulance at the expense of the student.

*Other Resources:*

24 hour local crisis assistance- SUN Behavioral Kentucky (859) 429-5188 North Key (859) 331-3292, Talbert House (513) 281-2273 24 hours National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

# Protocol for Suicide Attempts or Gestures

For the purpose of this policy, suicide is the purposeful act of causing one’s own death; attempted suicide is any act, threat, or gesture in which a person engages in life threatening behavior(s) with the intent of jeopardizing his/her life; and threatening suicide is any expression of intent to seriously harm oneself or take one’s life.

When a student has made any kind of a suicide attempt, suicide gesture or has threatened suicide, our first and primary concern is for the student’s health and safety. There is not always a clear dividing line between an attempt and a gesture and we take both very seriously.

If any member of the college community becomes aware of a suicide attempt, suicide gesture or threat we take the following steps:

1. If the attempt/gesture has just occurred, Campus Safety will call an ambulance to the scene and also contact the Counseling Center staff. The Counseling Center staff and/or Campus Safety will contact the Dean of Students who will assist in assessing the situation and then he/she will contact other members of the professional staff for assistance as needed.
2. The Dean of Students or someone he/she delegates will phone the student’s emergency contact and explain the situation and ask that a parent, guardian or other responsible adult come to TMU as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the Counseling Center staff may be contacted if assistance is needed to advocate for the student’s admittance to the hospital.
3. The Dean of Students will meet with the family member when he/she arrives at TMU. If the student suggests and would benefit from a voluntary medical leave, the paperwork will be completed by the Dean of Students. TMU does not discriminate on the basis of disability, including mental illness. TMU recognizes its ability to discipline or dismiss students that pose direct threats to others, but will not discipline or dismiss a student based on direct threats to self alone.
4. In order to return to school, the student must have a psychological assessment and an on- going treatment plan that will allow them to be successful in a rigorous, residential, academic community. Counseling Center staff or the Dean of Students may request documentation that this has occurred in order to verify that the student has received treatment and is safe to resume classes.
5. If the college becomes aware of a student’s suicide attempt or gesture sometime after the act, then the Counseling Center staff will interview the student and in consultation with the Dean of Students will determine what action, if any, is necessary. The student may be asked to obtain a psychological assessment and an ongoing treatment plan in order to continue to be an active student.

*Coordination.* Our efforts following a suicide attempt or suicide gesture will be coordinated by the Dean of Students and Counseling Center.

*Documentation*. Documentation regarding the suicide attempt, threat or suicide gesture will be documented as appropriate in the student’s electronic medical record.

# Services to Imminently Dangerous Students

* In managing cases where imminent danger to a student or someone else is at issue, The Counseling Center staff will act to minimize the danger in consultation with their professional colleagues. Should center colleagues be unavailable, staff will seek professional consultation with other colleagues.
* In keeping with professional ethics codes and legal requirements, maintaining the safety of students and others takes precedence over maintaining the confidentiality of clients. Even so, in the event of a necessary disclosure of confidential information, only information vital to contributing to safety will be disclosed, and then only to persons in a position to make appropriate use of the information.
* Counseling Center staff reserves the right to inform necessary staff and emergency personnel if there is a serious suicide attempt/intent or other dangerous behavior that requires hospitalization. The Dean or Assistant Dean may determine if it’s necessary to inform the student’s emergency contact listed on file with TMU.
* Careful and prompt documentation will be made of consultations secured and steps taken to minimize danger.

# RETENTION OF FILES

Starting January 14, 2019, all individual counseling sessions conducted by Counseling Center will be documented within St. Elizabeth Physicians’ electronic health record. Students will electronically review and sign Consent to Treat and Privacy Practices at the time of their first session each academic year. Emergency contacts will be reviewed and updated annually. All students must list at least one emergency contact not currently enrolled or employed at TMU. Students wishing to have information about their treatment released to a third party must complete St. Elizabeth Physicians’ Authorization of Disclosure of Protected Health Information form.

Hard files that pre-date the implementation of the electronic record will be maintained for a period of 7 years following the last contact with a client. These will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within the Counselor’s office. At the end of the 7 year period, files will be destroyed. A record of destroyed files will be maintained by the TMU Counseling Center. This record shall include the client name and date of last contact. If a student is a minor when they seek services, the guardian of that student must complete initial paperwork. No files will be removed from the premises unless by court order or some extraordinary circumstance.

# TERMINATION OF SERVICES

Termination of Services occurs when a student is no longer in a sustained relationship with the counselor. This may occur when the student:

* Has achieved the goals set forth in counseling
* Has withdrawn from Thomas More University
* Has been referred to other sources outside of the Counseling Center
* Does not show for at least 3 appointments
* Makes repeated cancellations

# MISSED APPOINTMENT

We appreciate prompt arrival for appointments. You are asked to contact our office if a situation occurs that will delay you or require you to reschedule an appointment. If you do miss an appointment, it is your responsibility to contact us to confirm your next appointment – otherwise the time may be used for another student.

# USE OF TECHNOLOGY

**Website**

Students can access The Counseling Center page through the Thomas More University Website by clicking the "Student Life" Tab on the home page then following the "Counseling & Wellness Programs" link on the left side. On that page a student can access Mental Health Information, Online Resources, and information regarding Sexual Violence/Title IV. Parents, faculty, and staff can also find links to useful information on this page.

# Email

The Counseling Center staff will only use email to communicate to students about relatively mundane matters such as scheduling an appointment and will strive to minimize confidential content. Urgent matters will be handled by phone or in person.