

Student Rights and Responsibilities for Services

Version 9

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Counselling is most effective when counsellors and students work together. Understanding your role as a student receiving counselling support can strengthen this partnership and help you actively participate in the counselling process to reach your goals.

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STUDENT RIGHTS

Students who are currently registered full-time or part-time Seneca students, and have paid the appropriate incidental fees are eligible for Counselling Services. Students will have access while actively enrolled in Seneca courses.

Students who are not currently enrolled but were enrolled in the previous semester, and plan to return, may be eligible for limited supports as the Counsellors connect them with community resources.

Privacy

Students have the right to Privacy and ethical care. Review the Privacy Policy below to understand the ways that Counselling Services protects and uses your information, and to understand the ethical and legal limits to confidentiality.

Counselling Services Privacy Notice

Counselling Services collects information for the purpose of providing counselling services to our students. Counselling Services follows legislated privacy obligations in accordance with the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) and when applicable, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), such as when assisting in an accommodation process.

Our professional staff (regulated health professionals, office assistants, and management) are committed to collecting, using, and disclosing personal health information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the services we provide.

Record Collection, Use and Disclosure

When you register with Counselling Services, a confidential digital file will be created. This file will contain information related to your intake, appointments, points of contacts with our office, as well as personal health information collected or created as part of the delivery of our services. The material and information that you share will be held in confidence and no one outside Counselling Services will have access to your file without your consent.

Counselling Services collects, uses and discloses only as much personal health information as is needed to achieve the following purposes:

- to provide assessment, counselling, treatment, referral and/or consultation services as requested by individuals
- to conduct quality improvement and risk-management activities

- to comply with external regulators; health-care professionals at Seneca College are regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons Ontario, College of Psychologists of Ontario, College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, College of Occupational Therapists Association, College of Nurses of Ontario and other licensing bodies that may inspect the college's records and interview professional staff as part of their regulatory activities in the public interest

Counselling Services currently uses an electronic records keeping system called ClockWork. Access to Counselling records in ClockWork is restricted to Counselling Services employees and information is protected through the use of technical and administrative safeguards such as restricted access permissions, multi-factor authentication and use of other industry standard security controls.

Limits of Confidentiality

Counselling Services relies on a student's express consent to release information, but there are some exceptional situations where Counselling Services are required to disclose your information without your consent. The exceptions include:

1. If you intend to harm yourself
2. If you intend to harm another person
3. If you or your counsellor has a strong reason to think that a Seneca College community member may be at risk of harm based on information that you provided in your session
4. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a child (any individual up to their 18th birthday) is at risk of emotional and/or physical neglect or emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. We are required by law to report this to the Children's Aid Society immediately
5. If an elderly person in a Long-Term Care Home or Retirement home is at risk of emotional or any form of maltreatment.
6. If your counselling record is subpoenaed by law
7. If you have a complaint about a regulated health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, psychologist, chiropractor, or massage therapist, etc.) with respect to their inappropriate sexual behavior towards you, and you provide us with that individual's name, we are required to report this complaint to their regulatory body

Secondary and Related Purposes

Like most organizations, we also collect, use and disclose information for secondary purposes, which are related to our primary purpose of doing business. The most common examples of our related and secondary purposes are as follows:

- To advise students and others of special events or opportunities (e.g. a seminar, development of a new service).
- Our department reviews student and other files for the purpose of ensuring that we provide high-quality services, including assessing the performance of our management staff and professional staff. In addition, external consultants (e.g. ministry auditors, lawyers, practice consultants, voluntary accreditation programs) may on our behalf do audits and continuing quality improvement reviews of our services, including reviewing student files and interviewing our professional and administrative staff.
- Some of our employees are regulated by a number of professional Colleges including: College of Psychologists of Ontario, College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, College of Occupational Therapists Association, and other licensing bodies who may inspect our records and interview our professional staff as a part of their regulatory activities in the public interest. In addition, as professionals, we will report serious misconduct, incompetence or incapacity of other practitioners, whether they belong to other organizations or our own.
- Our organization believes that it should report information suggesting serious illegal behaviour to the authorities. External regulators have their own strict privacy obligations. Sometimes these reports include personal information about our students, or other individuals, to support the concern (e.g., improper services). Also, like all organizations, various government agencies (e.g. Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, etc.) have the authority to review our files and interview our staff as a part of their mandates. In these circumstances, we may consult with professionals (e.g. lawyers, accountants) who will investigate the matter and report back to us.

You can choose not to be part of some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g. by declining to receive notice of special events or opportunities). We do not, however, have much choice about some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g. external regulation).

Protecting Student Information

We understand the importance of protecting personal and personal health information. For that reason, we have taken the following steps:

- paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area
- electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times
- access to electronic health records is protected by the use of passwords and multi-factor authentication
- paper information is transmitted through sealed, addressed envelopes or boxes by reputable Seneca staff or companies
- electronic information is transmitted either through a secure provider, a direct line, has identifiers removed or is encrypted
- staff are trained to collect, use and disclose personal health information only as necessary to fulfil their duties and in accordance with the department's privacy policy
- external consultants and agencies with access to personal information must enter into privacy agreements with Seneca

Record Retention and Destruction

We retain personal health information to ensure we can answer any questions you might have about the services provided and for our own accountability to external regulatory bodies. We keep our student files for 10 years.

Student paper files/records stored under this provision are held off site, at our third-party storage company used by Seneca.

We destroy paper files containing personal health information by shredding. We destroy electronic information by deleting it and, when the hardware is discarded, we ensure that the hard drive is physically destroyed.

Feedback and Complaints

Students have the right to provide feedback or register a complaint if they are concerned about the way their information has been managed (privacy) care they have received (counselling/service). Please see the Complaint Processes below for full details.

Complaints Processes

Concerns About Privacy

Step 1) Please **email, call, or visit** the Counselling Services offices and request to speak with the Senior Manager of Counselling Services to review your concerns directly, if possible.

Step 2) If you have more questions after speaking with the Senior Manager in Counselling Services, or if you wish to make a formal complaint about the department's privacy practices, you can do so in writing to our Privacy Officer. The Privacy Officer will attempt to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

The Privacy Officer will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, ensure that it is investigated promptly and that you are provided with a formal decision with reasons.

Privacy Officer

Seneca 1750 Finch Ave. East North York, Ont. M2J 2X5

416.764.0400 privacyoffice@senecapolytechnic.ca

Individuals also have the right to contact the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario about Seneca's privacy practices or how their personal health information has been handled.

Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario

2 Bloor St. E. Suite 1400 Toronto, Ont. M4W 1A8

416.326.3333 info@ipc.on.ca

Concerns About Professionalism/Competence of Professional Staff

If you have a concern about the professionalism or competence of our services or the mental or physical capacity of any of our professional staff:

Step 1) Please **email, call, or visit** the Counselling Services offices and request to speak with the Senior Manager of Counselling Services to review your concerns directly, if possible.

Step 2) If you are unable to meet with the Senior Manager or the issue is unresolved, request to speak with the Director of Counselling Services.

Step 3) If we cannot satisfy or address your concerns, you are entitled to bring concerns forward to the counsellor's regulatory body.

The counsellor's membership in one of the below regulatory bodies will be indicated in their email signature, or an office assistant can provide you with this information.

The College of Psychologists of Ontario

110 Eglinton Ave. W. Suite 500 Toronto, Ont. M4R 1A3

416.961.8817

The College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario

375 University Avenue, Suite 803 Toronto, Ont. M5G 2J5

416.479.4330 or 1.844.712.1364

The College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

250 Bloor St. E. Suite 1000 Toronto, Ont. M4W 1E6

416.972.9882



Change of Counsellors

Students have the right to request to change counsellors if they feel they are not able to make progress with the assigned counsellor. Students will be asked to consult a manager about this transfer, a supportive conversation to understand the request and better meet your needs. Please complete the [Request to Change Counsellors](#) form.



Access to Records

Students have the right to request access to their records and corrections if they believe their records contain incorrect information. For more information review the Student Access to Records information.

Student Access to Records

With only a few exceptions, students have the right to access their personal health information. Students will be asked to make this request in writing to:

Counselling Services Seneca College

1750 Finch Ave. East North York, Ont. M2J 2X5

Email: senecacnas@senecapolytechnic.ca

Telephone: 416.764.9700

We can help you identify what records we might have about you. We will also try to help you understand any information you do not understand (e.g. short forms, technical language, etc.). We reserve the right to charge a nominal fee for such requests.

If we cannot give you access, we let you know the reason access has been denied. Requests are responded to within 30 days; however, there are limited circumstances where we are permitted to extend the time limit beyond 30 days.

If you believe there is an error in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This applies to factual information and not to any professional opinions we may have formed. We may ask you to provide documentation that the information in the file is incorrect. Where we agree that an error has been made, we will make the correction and notify anyone to whom we sent this information. If we do not agree that an error has been made, we will still agree to include a brief statement from you in your file on the point and we will forward that statement to anyone else who received the earlier information.



STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Active Participation

Students are responsible for active participation in the counselling process in order for the counselling to be effective. Progress is most likely to occur when students continue to work on their goals between sessions. If you feel you are not making progress, it is important to give your counsellor this feedback and work together to adjust your plan so it works best for you.



Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for behaving respectfully and following the **Student Code of Conduct** when accessing any services, including Counselling Services, within Seneca Polytechnic. Abusive behaviours will not be tolerated.



Cancellation/No Show Policy

We are a very busy Seneca Student Service Department, providing supports to many Seneca students. Cancelling an appointment when you are not able to make it means you are freeing up an appointment spot and helping other students who are waiting and can benefit from an earlier appointment.

We understand unforeseen circumstances occasionally arise. We are confident you are doing an amazing job at managing your busy schedule as a student, including your health and your appointments with us.

Cancellation

If you need to cancel an appointment, please provide as much notice as possible.

You can cancel an appointment by:

- Email: senecacnas@senecapolytechnic.ca, please include the date and time of the Appointment you'd like to cancel or reschedule.
- Phone: 416.794.9700, our phone lines are open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Do not email specific counsellors or care providers.

For 1:1 Support appointments, you must cancel at least 24 business hours before your appointment starts.

*Note: If you have an appointment on a Monday and you wish to cancel it, you must notify us by 4:30 p.m. on Friday if possible.

The Office Assistants will work with you to reschedule the next available appointment.

No Show

An appointment that is missed without any notice is considered a No Show.

If there are frequent missed appointments, particularly if a student misses two consecutive appointments without providing any notice (i.e. without canceling or emailing their counsellor regarding the circumstances) the assigned counsellor will indicate this in the file.

The next time the student calls for an appointment, they may be asked to consult with the Senior Manager regarding the barriers to attending their appointments. Please note, this is not punitive. The intention is to ensure that you are booking services that meet your needs. If for some reason the schedule or services available are not a good match for you, we want to help generate solutions.



tags : access-records, cancellation/noshow, change-counsellors, conduct, feedback-complaints, participation, privacy, scentedproducts