

What to Expect During the Counseling Process:

What Will My First Session Be Like?

- You should arrive several minutes before your scheduled appointment time to fill out paperwork.
- The first visit is an information collecting session that generally lasts 45-50 minutes.
- This session will be conducted in an interview format.
- The counselor conducting the interview will ask several questions to get all the necessary information (many of the questions are standard questions that are asked of everyone).
- The information you provide during the first session will be used to determine what services will be most appropriate for you. At the end of the session, the counselor will share his/her impressions with you and the two of you will discuss a plan.

Will the Counselor Keep the Information I Tell Them Private?

The law requires that your counselor keeps your sessions confidential. This means that what you share with your counselor will be kept private and is only between you and your counselor. Your counselor will give you a document to sign explaining the limitations to confidentiality. Those few limits to confidentiality include;

- **First**, your counselor is required to ensure that you and others are safe. This means that if he/she learns that you are considering hurting yourself or someone else, **confidentiality must/will be broken.**
- He/she is also required to report any abuse/neglect of vulnerable individuals (children, elderly, disabled people).
- In rare cases, a court of law can require the release of records (in this case, typically only a summary is shared, and not every detail that you talked about during counseling).
- It is common for counselors working at college counseling centers to be supervised by a licensed professional. In this case, your counselor may discuss your counseling with his/her supervisor and counselor colleagues. The purpose of these discussions is to get you the best services and treatment possible at the college and/or in the community.
- One last point that is particularly relevant for college counseling center counselors: the fact that he/she knows you is confidential information. You might run into your counselor on campus or while out with friends. He/she will not acknowledge you. This doesn't mean that he/she is mad or does not like you; it is merely to protect your privacy. Your counselor will inform you about confidentiality and his/her limits to confidentiality during your first meeting. Do not hesitate to ask questions.

What Should I Expect After the First Session?

After the initial information-gathering session(s) (sometimes it will take more than one session), you will typically make an appointment to return to see the counselor:

- Counseling sessions are usually between 45 to 50 minutes
- The sessions are usually weekly at the beginning, and will often be reduced to biweekly, monthly etc. as conditions improve for you

- You and your counselor will create specific goals that you will work on
- Some counselors will assign “homework” (see below for an explanation of homework) to be completed between sessions
- At the beginning of each session, your counselor will check-in with you about how the past week has been and your experience with the homework assignment(s)
- Then you will discuss issues specific to your goals for counseling and ways to accomplish those goals

Why Do I Have to Do Homework?

You may be thinking “I have enough homework for my classes, why do I need to do more?” The homework assigned by your counselor is not the same as your schoolwork. In order to make changes in your life, you will need to work on things between sessions and try applying your new knowledge and skills to your everyday life.

What can you expect for homework? Homework can be many things; it depends on what you want to change and in what stage you are in counseling. Your counselor might give you informational readings or she/he might ask you to practice relaxation techniques, perform “behavioral experiments,” keep a journal or carryout self-monitoring activities. All of which are designed for your personal success.

Is there a fee?

There is no fee charged to MCC students for counseling services.

How do I schedule an appointment?

If you would like to schedule an appointment with a counselor, please call 585-292-2140 or at the Downtown Campus call 585-685-6002. You can also make an appointment by visiting the front desk in the Counseling Center in 3-103.