VMI HEALTH CENTER

CENTER FOR CADET COUNSELING

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES/INFORMED CONSENT

Effective Date: February 1, 2011

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW PSYCHOLOGICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Confidentiality: How Your Privacy Is Protected

We will use and protect your information in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Code of Virginia.

The Center for Cadet Counseling's records are kept separate from academic, disciplinary, and medical records to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. CCC records are maintained in an electronic database that is stored in a secured, password protected environment and accessible only to CCC staff. Further, all CCC staff sign a binding confidentiality agreement that prohibits the unauthorized release of client information. To further protect your confidentiality, CCC staff members do not acknowledge that they are familiar with clients while outside the Center, unless the client acknowledges the staff member first.

Information obtained during CCC sessions will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Center without your knowledge and written consent. If you sign a written authorization allowing us to disclose information, you can later cancel your authorization in writing, and we will not disclose any further information after we receive your cancellation.

The only exceptions to these strict confidentiality rules are rare instances where clinicians are required to reveal particular information by federal or state laws. Such exceptions include when:

- We believe that there is a substantial likelihood that a client will cause serious physical harm to her/himself or another person unless protective measures are taken. In these cases, Virginia law mandates that the parents of dependent students must be notified of the situation.
- We have reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected or an aged or incapacitated adult is being subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- We receive a court order upon good cause shown or in compliance with a subpoena.
- We receive a request for information by a threat assessment team at a public institution of higher education.
- We are approached by authorized federal officials for information related to national security and intelligence activities. By law, we may not be able to reveal to the client when we have disclosed such information to the government.
- We need to seek legal advice from VMI's Policy & Legal Affairs Advisor.
- The parents of a minor (i.e., a client who is under the age of 18) request information.

Individual client files may also be reviewed by the CCC's accrediting agency during scheduled site visits.

On some occasions it may be necessary to utilize the VMI Infirmary. At that time, the Director of the VMI Health Center and nursing staff will be notified of the circumstances for your visit in efforts to coordinate care.

Use of Electronic Mail
Because of the high value we place on the privacy of those utilizing our services, staff members of the CCC use email only to address scheduling issues. Further, we cannot guarantee that e-mail messages will be read regularly or within an appropriate period of time, especially in emergency situations. If you have a need to communicate about matters other than scheduling, please contact us either in-person (2nd floor post hospital) or by phone (540-464-7667).

Faxing of Confidential Information
With your consent, the CCC may fax confidential information to other professionals to facilitate your care. When faxing confidential information, CCC staff complete a cover sheet which states that the information contained in the fax is confidential; attempt to fax the document at a time when it will be immediately retrieved by the recipient; and request confirmation from the recipient that the fax was received.

Requests for Confidential Information by Non-Treatment Agencies
Acceptance into certain academic programs and/or fields of employment (e.g., law, government, Peace Corp, military) may be contingent upon a client's willingness to permit the release of confidential psychological information. To protect the privacy of the client, we will only release specific information upon written request from the client. On receipt of this request we can provide specific information to the person/place specified on the signed release of confidential information form.

Training and Employment at the CCC
To avoid issues that may occur when the CCC staff relate to an individual in a role other than as a client, all current and former CCC clients are prohibited from training or working at the CCC.

Research
The CCC collects client information for our own internal planning, quality assurance, and accreditation efforts and to educate the Institute's faculty and staff about the issues and needs confronting VMI's cadets. All data is presented in group form, and to maintain confidentiality, no information about individual cadets is provided.

Court-Mandated Services
The CCC does not provide services to cadets who are required to receive pre-adjudication and/or court-mandated mental health treatment or assessment. Cadets seeking such services will be provided referrals to professionals in the Rockbridge community.

Introduction To Counseling
Counseling varies depending upon the personalities of the client and the counselor. There are many different methods you and your counselor may use to deal with the problems you are experiencing. Counseling is not like a visit to a medical doctor. It calls for a very active effort on your part. In order to be successful, you will have to commit to working on issues both when meeting with your counselor and during your daily life. Practicing the ideas and skills discussed in counseling sessions is what can really make the difference.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Because counseling often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has been shown to lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. There is no way to predict specifically what you will experience.

If you ever have questions or concerns about what you and your counselor are doing in your sessions, please inform your counselor. If you have concerns about the professionalism of your counselor and would be uncomfortable speaking directly to her/him about this matter, please contact the Director of the CCC.

As A Client, You Have The Right To:

- Request and provide written authorization to release information. You have the right to revoke your authorization in writing at any time.
- Review your file with your counselor and to request a treatment summary.
- Request that your counselor amend any information in your file that you believe is incorrect or incomplete.
- Request that communications from our office be delivered via alternative means or at alternative locations. Due to concerns about the confidentiality, email can be used only to schedule and cancel appointments.
- Request an accounting of disclosures of information made about you. Other than the exceptions previously outlined, no disclosures will be made about you without your written consent.
- Obtain an additional copy of our privacy practices at any time during treatment.

The CCC Has The Responsibility To:

- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the information you share with us. We will not use or disclose your protected information without your authorization, except as described in this notice.
- Abide by the terms of this notice for as long as it is in effect. We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected information we maintain. Should our information practices change, we will create and post a revised notice.
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate information by alternative means or at alternative locations.

Psychiatric Services

At times, medication may help a client deal more effectively with their concerns. A limited number of psychiatric hours are available to clients through a Psychiatrist that is located off-post who works with other clinical staff to provide integrated, quality psychiatric care to clients at VMI. Clients are referred and scheduled by the Cadet Counseling Center.

Questions or Complaints about Confidentiality

If you are concerned that we have violated your privacy rights or disagree with a decision we made about access to your records, you may contact the Director of the CCC, LTC Sarah Jones, at (540) 464-7667. All complaints must be submitted in writing. If you file a complaint, we will not take action against you or change our treatment of you in any way.

Scheduling Policy

With the exception of emergency situations, services at the Center for Cadet Counseling are provided on an appointment basis. During regular office hours appointments can be scheduled in person, phone (540-464-7667), or email to **kirkpatrickke10@vmi.edu**. Appointments typically last 30 – 60 minutes. When you request services at the Center, time is reserved on a counselor's schedule for your appointment. Thus, missed and canceled appointments prevent valuable, limited staff time from being offered to other cadets in need.

In an effort to ensure that the Cadet Counseling Center is providing services in the most effective manner possible, we have established the following policies:

- The CCC operates under a short-term treatment model under which the cadet and the counselor collaboratively identify and address the cadet's primary concerns within a limited number of sessions. Cadets who request or require longer-term treatment are referred to community resources.
- Please call if you will be late or need to cancel or reschedule an appointment. We would appreciate as much advance notice as possible, preferably, at least 24 hours prior to your appointment time.
- Services may also be terminated if an excessive number of sessions are canceled.

Contacting the Center for Cadet Counseling in case of Emergency

During regular office hours emergency appointments can be scheduled in person, phone (540-464-7667), or email to **kirkpatrickke10@vmi.edu**. Emergency appointments are handled on a first-come, first-serve basis, according to counselor availability and the urgency of the request. After business hours and weekends, please call or proceed to the VMI infirmary, SJH Hospital, or call 911.

VMI Infirmary 464-7218
1st Floor Post Hospital

Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital 458-3300
1 Health Circle, Lexington

Rockbridge Area Community Services 463-3141
241 Greenhouse Road, Lexington

Suicide Prevention Hotline (800) 273-8255
National

Project Horizon (Sexual Assault) 463-7861
120 Varner Lane, Lexington

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I have read and understood the above information which outlines the risks and benefits of counseling, how to get help after hours, and the limits of confidentiality. My counselor has discussed this information with me and answered any questions that I may have .

Client Name (printed):_____

Client Signature:_____ Date:_____

Counselor Name (printed):_____

Counselor Signature:_____ Date:_____