

Rights, Responsibilities & Reporting

Gladstone Women's Health Centre supports your rights as an individual, a client and as a person. We are committed to ensuring you know your rights and how to exercise these. As a participant of our centre(s), you have rights. These are listed below:

Rights of clients in counselling:

- Right to confidentiality
- Right to informed consent
- Right to autonomy
- Right to receive respectful and non-discriminatory treatment
- Right to receive services in a safe and comfortable environment
- Right to choose a different counsellor or terminate counselling at any time
- Right to access own records
- Right to provide feedback and suggestions on how to improve services

Responsibilities of clients in counselling:

- Be honest and open with their counsellor
- Participate in the therapy process
- Keep appointments and be on time
- Communicate any concerns or dissatisfaction with the counselling process
- Respect the confidentiality of others
- Follow through with any agreed-upon actions or recommendations

Rights of Counsellors

- Right to ethical and professional conduct
- Right to continuing education and professional development
- Right to set boundaries in therapy
- Right to choose clients and terminate therapy if necessary
- Right to self-care and protect their own wellbeing

Responsibilities of Counsellors

- Maintain client confidentiality
- Provide informed consent to clients
- Practice within their scope of competence and seek supervision when needed
- Avoid dual relationships that may compromise the therapy process
- Respect the autonomy of clients and avoid imposing personal values
- Report any suspected child abuse or elder abuse
- Keep records and documentation of therapy sessions

Boundaries in the client-counsellor relationship

- **Confidentiality:** Counsellors must maintain client confidentiality unless there is a legal obligation to disclose information, such as in cases of suspected child abuse.
- **Professionalism:** Counsellors must maintain a professional demeanour, avoid engaging in dual relationships, and avoid behaviour that could be perceived as exploitative or inappropriate.
- **Autonomy:** Counsellors should respect the client's autonomy and avoid imposing their own values or beliefs on the client.
- **Boundary crossings:** Counsellors should be aware of the potential for boundary crossings and take steps to avoid behaviours that could compromise the therapeutic relationship, such as excessive self-disclosure or physical contact.
- **Limits of competence:** Counsellors should practice within their area of competence and seek supervision or refer clients to other professionals when necessary.
- **Termination of therapy:** Counsellors should respect the client's right to choose when to terminate therapy and avoid abrupt endings without adequate preparation or follow-up.

Duty of care obligations

- **Providing safe and ethical care:** Counsellors must prioritise the safety and well-being of their clients and avoid causing harm. This includes avoiding dual relationships, avoiding exploitation, and ensuring that clients are not subjected to any forms of abuse.
- **Maintaining confidentiality:** Counsellors must keep client information confidential, except in cases where there is a legal obligation to disclose information (e.g., suspected child abuse).
- **Informed consent:** Counsellors must provide clients with information about the counselling process, including its purpose, goals, risks, and benefits, and obtain informed consent before beginning therapy.
- **Competence:** Counsellors must practice within their area of competence and seek supervision or refer clients to other professionals when necessary.
- **Avoiding conflicts of interest:** Counsellors must avoid conflicts of interest and take steps to ensure that their personal values, beliefs, and interests do not interfere with the therapeutic relationship.
- **Providing appropriate treatment:** Counsellors must provide clients with appropriate treatment that is tailored to their individual needs and goals, and avoid imposing their own values or beliefs on the client.
- **Termination of therapy:** Counsellors must respect the client's right to choose when to terminate therapy and avoid abrupt endings without adequate preparation or follow-up.

Mandatory Reporting

Counsellors may have mandatory reporting obligations in certain situations, such as:

- **Suspected child abuse:** Counsellors are required to report any suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate authorities.
- **Suspected elder abuse:** Counsellors may be required to report any suspected cases of elder abuse to the appropriate authorities.
- **Threats of harm to self or others:** Counsellors may have a duty to report if a client makes threats of harm to themselves or others.
- **Court-ordered evaluations:** Counsellors may be required to provide evaluations or testimony in court proceedings if they are court-ordered.

Compliance with laws and regulations

Counsellors must comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including those related to confidentiality and mandatory reporting. It's important for counsellors to be familiar with the laws and regulations in their jurisdiction and to seek guidance from professionals or legal counsel as needed.

Still unsure?

Please speak with your Counsellor if you are unsure of your rights and responsibilities or phone our office if you would like a staff member to help clarify these.