



Counseling Services: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Consumer Rights

- ◆ Be informed of the qualifications of your counselor: education, experience, and professional counseling certification(s) and state license(s).
- ◆ Receive an explanation of services offered, your time commitments, and fee scales and billing policies prior to receipt of services.
- ◆ Be informed of limitations of the counselor's practice to special areas of expertise (e.g. career development, ethnic groups, etc.) or age group (e.g., adolescents, older adults, etc).
- ◆ Have all that you say treated confidentially and be informed in advance of any limitations of state laws or professional ethical codes placing limitations on confidentiality in the counseling relationship.
- ◆ Ask questions about the counseling techniques and strategies including potential risks and benefits of services proposed to help you.
- ◆ Participate in setting goals and evaluating your progress toward meeting them.
- ◆ Be informed of how to contact the counselor in an emergency situation.
- ◆ Request referral for a second opinion at any time.
- ◆ Request copies of records and reports to be used by other counseling professionals.
- ◆ Receive a copy of the code of ethics to which your counselor adheres.
- ◆ Contact the appropriate professional organization or state credentialing board if you have doubts or complaints relative to the counselors' conduct.
- ◆ Understand the implications of a diagnosis and the intended use of psychological tests and reports.
- ◆ Be aware that you are free to choose whether or not to enter a counseling relationship and who will provide the services.
- ◆ Terminate the counseling relationship at any time.

Consumer Responsibilities

- ◆ Set and keep appointments with your counselor: Let him/her know as soon as possible if you cannot keep an appointment.
- ◆ Pay your fees in accordance with the schedule you pre-established with the counselor . Help plan your goals.
- ◆ Follow through with agreed upon goals.
- ◆ Keep your counselor informed of your progress toward meeting your goals. Accept and act on appropriate referrals from your counselor.
- ◆ Avoid placing your counselor in a dual relationship by carefully considering requests to barter services or join in social interactions.
- ◆ Terminate your counseling relationship before entering into arrangements with another counselor.

What to Do if You are Dissatisfied with the Services of a Professional Counselor

◆ Remember that a counselor who meets the needs of one person may be wrong for another. If you are dissatisfied with the services of your counselor:

◆ Express your concern directly to the counselor if possible.

◆ Terminate the counseling relationship if the situation remains unresolved.

◆ Seek the advice of the counselor's supervisor if the counselor is practicing in a setting where he/she receives direct supervision.

◆ Contact the appropriate state licensing board, national certification organization, or professional association if you believe the counselor's conduct to be unethical.

This statement was prepared jointly by the National Board for Certified Counselors and Chi Sigma Iota to help you understand and exercise your rights as a consumer of counseling services. NBCC and CSI believe that clients who are informed consumers are able to best use counseling services to meet their individual needs.

CSI

Chi Sigma Iota International is an academic and professional honor society which recognizes excellence among counseling students and professionals. It includes a worldwide network of persons who have met rigid academic standards and achieved professional recognition through credentialing.

NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors is an Independent, non-profit organization founded by the American Association for Counseling and Development, the national professional association for counselors. NBCC's primary purposes are to establish and monitor a national certification system, to identify to professionals and the public those counselors who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification, and to maintain a register of those counselors.