

Freeflow

Counselling Service

Information sharing agreement

As a general rule, a Freeflow counsellor will keep all information shared with them in sessions confidential, unless they have a student's verbal or written consent to disclose certain information.

If verbal consent the counsellor will have this noted in their client notes

There are, however, important exceptions to this rule that are important for each student to understand before they share personal information in a therapy session. This is discussed in the first session.

In some situations, a counsellor is required by law or by the guidelines of their profession to disclose information whether or not they have their clients' permission.

I have listed some of these situations below.

Confidentiality cannot be maintained when:

A student tells their counsellor that they plan to cause serious harm or death to themselves, and the counsellor believes they have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. The counsellor must take steps to inform the school DSL what they have been told and how serious they believe this threat to be. The counsellor must make sure that the student is protected from harming themselves.

A student tells their counsellor that they plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else who can be identified, and the counsellor believes they have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation, again the counsellor must inform the school DSL, and ask that the DSL inform the person who the student intended to harm.

A student is doing things that could cause serious harm to themselves or someone else, even if they do not intend to harm themselves or another person. In these situations, the counsellor will need to use their own professional judgment to decide whether the school DSL should be informed. They may discuss this with their clinical supervisor maintaining confidentiality.

A student tells the counsellor that they are being abused-physically, sexually or emotionally-or that they have been abused in the past. In this situation, the counsellor is required by law to report the abuse to the school DSL and/or Children's Social Care/Police.

A student is involved in a court case or working with another organisations such as CSC and a request is made for information about the counselling or therapy. If this happens, the counsellor will not disclose information without the students written agreement unless the court requires them

to. The counsellor will do all they can within the law to protect the student's confidentiality, and if they are required to disclose information to the court, they will inform the student that this is happening.

Communicating with school, parent(s) or carer(s):

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, the counsellor will not tell school, parents or carers specific things shared with them in private therapy sessions. This includes activities and behaviour that school, parents/carers would not approve of -- or would be upset by -- but that do not put the student at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if a student's risk-taking behaviour becomes more serious, then they will need to use their professional judgment to decide whether the student is in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If they feel that they are in such danger, the counsellor will communicate this information to the school DSL and ask them to share this directly with the parent or carer.

Example: If a student tells the counsellor that they have tried alcohol at a few parties, the counsellor would keep this information confidential. If a student then shares that they are drinking and driving or that they are a passenger in a car with a driver who is drunk, the counsellor would not keep this information confidential from school/parent/carers. Furthermore, if a student tells the counsellor, or if the counsellor believes based on what has been shared, that they are addicted to alcohol, the counsellor would not keep this information confidential. This would be shared with the school DSL so the appropriate additional support can be put in place.

Example: If a student shares that they are having protected sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend, the counsellor would keep this information confidential. If they are told, on several occasions, that the student has engaged in unprotected sex with people they do not know or in unsafe situations, the counsellor will not keep this information confidential.

Students will always be advised at the start of therapy that they can ask the counsellor questions about the types of information that may be disclosed. They can ask in the form of "hypothetical situations," in other words: "If someone told you that they were doing _____, would you tell their school or parents?"

Even if the counsellor has agreed to keep information confidential - to not tell school/parent or carer – the counsellor may believe that it is important for them to know what is going on in the student's life. In these situations, the counsellor will encourage the student to tell a person they trust in school/ parent/carers and will help them explore the best way to tell them.

Counsellors notes:

The counsellor will keep notes and paperwork on each student. Freeflow ask if possible, for a locked cabinet to store these notes **which will remain the counsellor's property**. The cabinet keys will only be given to the counsellor. If, this is not possible the counsellor is responsible for taking these notes home each day and returning them the next working day. They will always ensure the notes are coded to protect confidentiality.

During the initial meeting assessments are made to find a starting point and goal. These assessment questionnaires will be used to provide a report on the counselling provision at the end of the school year. No names will be shared linked to information provided

To conclude

School: The counsellor will not share any information, other than that stated above with school unless they have the student's permission to do so.

When/if information is shared to safeguard a student, the counsellor will abide by the schools safeguarding policy

At times the counsellor may request to speak to someone at school to find out how the student is doing in school. Also, it may be helpful in some situations for the counsellor to give suggestions to a teacher or other member of school staff. Likewise, a member of school staff may ask for information.

If this was to happen the counsellor will discuss this directly with the student and ask for verbal or written permission. A very unlikely situation might come up in which the counsellor does not have the student's permission, but they believe that it is very important for them to be able to share certain information with someone at school. In this situation, the counsellor will use their professional judgment to decide whether to share any information.

Doctors and other professional medical professionals:

If the counsellor is working with the student a part of a treatment plan; for example, if the student is under ELCAS/CAMHS and taking medication in addition to seeing a counsellor. The counsellor will share information with the other team members to facilitate the student's treatment. The counsellor will always inform the student of the information they will be sharing, and they will get the students permission.

What information does Freeflow expect school to share with them:

Most counsellors seek to get the necessary information directly from the student they are working with. However, to safeguard both the counsellor and student, and to ascertain a starting point, Freeflow do ask for certain information on the referral form.

Freeflow, also ask that school understand the confidentiality of sessions and don't ask for information that should not be shared. We understand school staff are concerned about student's

welfare but being refused may affect the relationship and understanding of the counsellor's role within school.

Thank you

Please sign and date but if you wish to discuss any item/s on this agreement please do get in contact.

Freeflow Signature

Edel McGinn

Dated 11th Nov 2020

School Signature

Ms Cat Gillies, School Business Manager



Dated

12/11/2020



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