

**CGST COUNSELLING CENTRE**  
**THE CARIBBEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**  
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This document serves to inform you, the client, about many aspects of online counselling services (OCS): about the process, the counsellor, the potential risks and benefits of services, safeguards against those risks, and alternatives to online services. Please read this entire document, before signing. Instructions on where to send the signed document are located below the signature line.

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**Client Informed Consent for Online Counselling Services**

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**About CGST Counselling Centre Online Counselling Services**

Online Counselling Services is also known as Tele practice, Cyber-psychology, Text-Based Therapy, Telehealth, Behavioural Telehealth, or Distance counselling. CGST Counselling Centre is providing a psychotherapy service that is not “in person” and is facilitated using an interactive use of technology. The technology used may include audio and/or video and/or email or data communications but is not limited to, telephone, email, internet, or video conference.

If it is determined that online counselling is appropriate, clients must submit verification to the terms and conditions outlined before services are rendered.

As with face-to-face sessions, online sessions provide a welcoming space to clients who wish to discuss any matter of personal concern. To participate in tele or online counselling, clients are required to agree with our online informed consent. Although online counselling services may be helpful, direct, face-to-face services are highly recommended and encouraged, especially for clients either looking for long-term treatment, clients in crisis or diagnosed with major mental health issues.

Online and telephone counselling for children under 18 years requires permission and supervision.

**Terms on Confidentiality**

The information disclosed during OCS is confidential. Information about the client will only be released with his or her written permission.

The counsellor/therapist will take all precautions to ensure OCS is confidential, but the client is informed of the disadvantages of OCS. These include, but are not limited to, the transmission being interrupted or accessed by an unauthorized person or by technical failures, the strength of internet connection or the varying time zones, cultural differences, and language barriers. Consequently, due to the nature of OCS, there is a chance for misunderstandings with telephone calls, texts, emails, video chat software and other similar modalities. The laws and guidelines that protect the confidentiality of any medical information also apply to OCS.

**CONFIDENTIALITY RESTRICTIONS:** The counsellor/therapist is legally and ethically required to release information about the client only in the following cases: if the counsellor/therapist determines risk of self-harm; if the counsellor/therapist determines risk of harm to others; and if the counsellor/therapist is informed about or suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a minor or of an incapacitated adult.

### **Privacy**

Although the internet provides the appearance of secrecy and privacy in counselling, privacy is more of an issue online than in person. The client is responsible for securing their computer hardware, internet access points, chat software (i.e. WeChat or Tinder), phone, email, and passwords. The counsellor/therapist has a right to his or her privacy and may wish to restrict the use of any copies or recordings the client makes of their communications. Clients must seek the permission of the counsellor/therapist before recording any portion of the session and/or posting any portion of said sessions on internet websites such as Facebook or YouTube.

### **Your Rights**

You have the right to withhold or withdraw consent at any time without affecting your right to future care or treatment or risking the loss or withdrawal of any services or benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

### **Clients and Proxies**

Clients who are 18 and older will be treated as they can legally sign for themselves. However, clients under the age of 18, their Informed Consent forms must be signed by a parent or guardian.

### **Appointment/Sessions**

The session duration is 45 – 50 minutes and client, parent/guardian (where necessary) are expected to be present and on time for all real-time appointments.

### **Cancellation Policy**

If you are unable to keep either a face-to-face appointment or an online/telephone appointment, you must notify me at least 24 hours in advance. If such advance notice is not received, you will be financially responsible for the session you missed. All no show or late **cancellation payment**

will be process on the day that it occurs. We reserve the right to use the client’s payment preference that was provided at intake.

### **Emergency Protocol**

In case of a life-threatening event/situation or an emergency, the client should contact the appropriate authorities, a crisis line, or an agency local to the client outlined below. In the event of an emergency or hardware or software problems please contact the CGST Counselling Centre office.

Clients may utilize the following crisis hotlines: **Rise Life International** (876) 967-3779| **Victim Support Unit** (876)946-0663/ (876)946—9286| **Woman Incorporated** (Crisis Centre): 876-929-9038 | **Choose Life International** (876) 920-7924/ (876) 390-4913/ (876) 856-296 | 1-800-NEWLIFE | **Jamaica Constabulary Force** (JCF) – 119 |

### **Identify Verification**

All new clients will have to verify their age and identity by providing a scanned image of their TRN, driver’s license, or other verifiable governmental identification. Clients must provide off-line contact information in case of a technology breakdown.

### **Risk of Harm**

OCS is not a crisis based clinical service. Online and telephone counselling may not be appropriate for clients with active suicidal or homicidal thoughts, or clients who are experiencing acute/severe mental health problems, such as manic or psychotic symptoms. Therapists are obliged to refuse to engage in /discontinue e-sessions if they consider the modality is not advantageous or suited to the client based on, but not limited to risk of harm to self or others.

At intake, a client who reports being at risk of harm to self or others will not be offered online psychotherapy services. If through the intake evaluation or subsequent psychotherapy sessions, a client is deemed to be at risk of harm to self or to others, the clinician will terminate the sessions, while providing alternative referral suggestions. If a client, who was not formerly at risk, should become at risk of such harm to self or others, they must immediately report it to the counsellor/therapist. In such cases, all effort will be made to provide the client with protective care. All clients wishing to engage in OCS must provide TWO next of kin contacts. One must be living near the client’s residence.

### **Potential benefits**

The potential benefits of receiving mental health services online include both the circumstances in which the counsellor considers OCS appropriate and the possible advantages of providing those services online. For example, the potential benefits of email may include: (1) being able to send and receive messages at any time of day or night; (2) never having to leave messages with

intermediaries; (3) avoiding not only intermediaries, but also voice mail; (4) being able to take as long as one wants to compose, and having the opportunity to reflect upon one's messages; (5) automatically having a record of communications to refer to later; and (6) feeling less inhibited than in person.

## **RECORDS**

The counsellor will maintain records of e-counselling and/or consultation services [reference notes, copies of transcripts of chat and internet communications, and session summaries]. All clinical records will be maintained as required by applicable legal and ethical standards according to the various counseling professions licensing boards.

## **Therapist Credentials**

All our professionals currently hold a license or are supervised by a licensed practitioner. Our licensed clinicians follow all the regulations for practicing under their license no matter what medium of communication is used. Counsellors/Therapists have experience and certification in online counselling and have worked in a variety of settings including schools and private practices.

## **Services and Approach to Psychotherapy**

The services offered depend on the platform or expert you see, but usually include and are not limited to- [individual, group] depression, stress, anxiety, grief, self-esteem, anger, relationships and more; Consultation services; Mental illness assessments and referrals to experts [medical doctor or psychiatrist] where applicable; coaching and support. These services are predominantly supported by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) however, an eclectic use of techniques will be used as the therapist deems fit for each client.

## **Technology**

CGST Counselling Centre online counsellors/therapists will use an email account with GMAIL, ZOOM and WHATSAPP compliant video chat service which serve as a means of communications to allow for the highest possible security and confidentiality of the content of your sessions. The client is responsible for securing his or her computer hardware, maintaining the security of their internet access points, email and password security. The counsellor/therapist is not liable for confidentiality breaches when they are caused by client error. The counsellor/therapist is not responsible for their client's equipment failure, e.g. camera, and/or Internet service. The counsellor/ therapist is not responsible for lapses in confidentiality that are in direct response to the client's actions. Please discuss any such concerns with your counsellor/therapist early in your

first session to develop strategies to limit risk. If the client prefers to receive telephone sessions, same is available.

Technical problems may occur. In the case of a telephone call or online platform, if the call or internet connection is disrupted or becomes unstable, the counsellor/therapist will reconnect with you shortly. If reconnection cannot be established within ten minutes, the session will be rescheduled. In addition, therapists will utilize and interact with the platform pre-approved by the client.

### **Electronic Device Requirements**

Clients are to ensure that their electronic device [tablet, laptop, desktop, smart phone] of choice is reliable and can facilitate the session. The device must be able to accommodate video calls and have built-in microphone.

### **Technology Risks**

These services rely on technology, which allows for greater convenience in service delivery. There are risks and threats in transmitting information over technology that include, but are not limited to, breaches of confidentiality, theft of personal information, limited ability to respond to emergencies, and disruption of service due to technical difficulties.

### **Payments**

A form of reliable payment must be established before the first session occurs. Payments can be made to our NCB CURRENT A/C # 331001651. Cheques and cash are welcome. Please screenshot the information after the payment has been made and WHATSAPP it to 876-832-2898.

**Your telephone number**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your email address**

\_\_\_\_\_

The address where you are currently living

\_\_\_\_\_

**NEXT OF KIN:** Please provide the name and phone number for someone we may contact in the event of an emergency.

1. Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship with your NEXT OF KIN? \_\_\_\_\_

**By signing this form**

1. I agree that I reside in Jamaica
2. I am aware that a “ZOOM/WHATSAPP Notice of Privacy” is available for me to read on the various platforms for reading.
3. I agree to participate in OCS psychotherapy. I have read, understood, and comply with the agreed-upon policies.
4. I understand that the fee agreed upon by The Counselling Centre is due the day before our session paid via appropriate means mentioned above. If the fee is not paid in advance the session will be cancelled.

**Print Client’s Name**

**Date**

**Signature of Client**

**Last 4 digit of TRN#**

**Printed Client’s Name (if minor)**

**Relationship to Client**

**Counsellor’s Signature**

**Date**

By checking the box, I agree that the signature I have entered above will be the electronic representation of my signature and initials for all purposes when I use them on documents, including legally binding contracts – just the same as a pen-and-paper signature.