

# Patient & Family Counselling Services

## Important Information for Our Clients

Welcome to Patient and Family Counselling Services (PFC). We know a cancer diagnosis can affect many parts of a person's life. Getting the support and guidance along the way is important and counsellors are here to help with both emotional (e.g. coping with anxiety) and practical (e.g. transportation, finances) needs.

### Counselling

Counselling sessions may involve learning new strategies for managing distress, discussions about relationships or changes in lifestyle, navigating systems of care, dealing with financial and practical concerns and referrals to community resources. Counsellors also lead support groups and educational sessions at our Centre.

### Counsellor Qualifications

All counsellors are qualified at the Master's or Doctorate Level in Social Work, Counselling, Clinical Psychology or another related discipline. We are very familiar with cancer-related issues and are registered with appropriate professional associations.

### Limits of Engagement

Our program provides professional short-term counselling services and group programs to cancer patients and their family members until 18 months after active cancer treatment. In-person counselling is the usual means of engaging in counselling sessions however, phone or virtual counselling is also available.

### Confidentiality & Privacy

Your privacy is important to us. At PFC, we follow all relevant provincial and federal privacy legislation (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or FIPPA) as well as BC Cancer policies related to confidentiality and privacy. For communication with third-parties such as government agencies, consent forms must be signed by the client.

Your health care information belongs to you and is held in confidence by BC Cancer, except in the following circumstances:

- When it is required by community health care agencies in accordance with privacy legislation for the purpose of continuity of care
- If the information is required by law to be disclosed (e.g. child in need of protection, court order and/or subpoena)
- If staff believe there may be a significant risk of harm to you or others
- When informed and voluntary consent is provided by you to release information

### Record Keeping

Summarized information from counselling sessions will be charted on your BC Cancer health record. Family members and others receiving services from our team will have a separate record. If you need copies of your records, you can request these from Health Information Services.

### Use of Email

Counselling will not be carried out with patients or family members through email. Email may be used at the discretion of counsellors in response to specific enquiries from clients such as scheduling appointments or requesting resource information. Please note that email content may become part of your health care record.

## Safety

Having a physically and emotionally safe space is a mutual expectation. We encourage the use of respectful language. Threats, violence and abusive language and behaviors are not tolerated.

## Switching Counsellors

We recognize that having a good relationship with your counsellor is important for successful outcomes. If you believe something can be better about your working relationship with your counsellor, we encourage you to speak with her/him about it. Such discussions can be very helpful for both clients and counsellors. You are also welcome to contact the PFC Practice Leader through our reception desk to discuss your counselling experience.

## Cancellations

Sometimes cancelling or changing counselling appointments is unavoidable. We request 24-hour's notice whenever possible.

## Teaching & Research

BC Cancer is a teaching and research organization. You may be offered services from volunteers or students working under the supervision of staff. You are free to accept or decline these services. You may also be invited to participate in research studies or to provide an evaluation of the services you receive. Again, your participation in such research or evaluations is entirely voluntary and your decision will not affect your care.

## After Hours Crisis Support

After hours, if you are considering suicide or concerned about someone who may be, please call **1-800-SUICIDE** from any location in British Columbia. After hours, if you need emotional support or mental health resources, please call **310-6789** from any location in Canada.

## Support Groups & Patient Resources

Counsellors provide group programs either in-person or online. We hope you will take advantage of the support we offer at our Centre. To find out what group programs are available please go online to [www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/support-programs](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/support-programs) and choose your Centre.

Helpful weblinks, video clips and topics related to coping and support are available through the BC Cancer website. Go to: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/patient-family-counselling](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/patient-family-counselling) and click on the button "Get help coping with cancer" for additional information.

To sign up to receive monthly Supportive Care eBulletins and a Patient Newsletter go to [www.bccancer.bc.ca/supportivecare](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/supportivecare).

For further information, please feel free to speak with any member of our team. If you wish to provide any specific feedback regarding our services, please ask to speak with our Practice Lead.

We look forward to working with you.

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