



Provincial Health Services Authority

Patient & Family Counselling

Statement of Service

Welcome to Patient and Family Counselling Services (PFC). It is normal to experience a wide range of feelings when you or a family member is diagnosed with cancer and facing treatment. Getting support and guidance along the way is important and counsellors are here to help with both emotional (e.g. coping with distress and worries) and practical (e.g. transportation or financial) concerns.

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 or other resources. Counsellors also lead support groups and educational sessions. Appointments are available in-person, via virtual health, or by telephone.

Counsellor Qualifications

Counsellors are qualified with a minimum of a master's degree in social work, counselling, clinical psychology or related discipline.

Limits of Engagement

Our program provides professional short-term cancer-related counselling services and group programs to cancer patients and their family members from diagnosis up to 18 months after active cancer treatment.

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 and will be available to your circle of care. If you need copies of your records, you can request these from Health Information Management. Navigate to the [Request Patient Records](https://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/patient-guide/request-patient-records) page (<https://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/patient-guide/request-patient-records>) of the BC Cancer website for additional information.

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. For urgent needs please contact PFC directly by phone. 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, abusive language and behaviors are not tolerated.

Counselling Experience

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 them about it. Such discussions can be very helpful for both clients and counsellors. You are also welcome to contact the PFC Clinical Coordinator through our reception desk to discuss your counselling experience.

Cancellations

Sometimes cancelling or rescheduling counselling appointments is unavoidable. We request 24-hour 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.

Urgent Crisis Support

If you are considering suicide or concerned about someone who may be, please call **9-8-8** from any location in Canada. In the event of an emergency call 9-1-1. If you need emotional support or mental health resources, please call the BC mental health support line at **310-6789**. These services are available 24/7.

Support Groups & Patient Resources

Counsellors also provide group programs. To find out what group programs are available, or to sign up for the Supportive Care Monthly eBulletin please go online to our [Support Programs](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/support-programs) page (www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/support-programs).

Helpful web links, video clips and topics related to coping and support are also available through the BC Cancer website on the [Coping with Cancer](https://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer) page (<https://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer>) .

We look forward to working with you.

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