

Policies on Electronic Communication

Electronic Mail (e-mail)

At CAPS we take your confidentiality seriously. E-mail cannot be guaranteed to be a secure means of communication. For this reason it is our policy to not use e-mail as a means to respond to any type of personal or confidential material, or to provide any type of therapeutic conversation. If an individual sends an e-mail communication to a CAPS staff person that contains confidential information, it is our policy to respond to such an e-mail by sending a brief explanation of this policy and indicating our limitations in using such a medium. This standard response has been created to protect the privacy of those who wish to use our services (including for consultations). If you choose to communicate with CAPS staff electronically, any communication you receive is for informational (not clinical) purposes. Information sent by CAPS staff is intended only for the person addressed. Any other use of e-mail communication (e.g., redistribution, dissemination, or clinical reliance) is strictly prohibited. Further, if you contact and/or provide CAPS with your e-mail address and give permission for us to use this e-mail address, it will be used for scheduling purposes only. Additionally, it will be your responsibility to keep your e-mail address updated.

Our staff cannot be guaranteed to respond in a timely manner to e-mail questions about services, providing programs or rescheduling appointments. In order to ensure a timely response to scheduling issues, programming requests, consultations needs, or emergency situations we ask that you contact our front desk for assistance (828.227.7469). This enables students, staff and faculty to receive a reply as promptly as possible if a staff person may be ill, at a conference, on vacation, or otherwise unable to check her/his e-mail. Furthermore, by communicating directly with the CAPS staff (via phone or in-person) you will have certainty that the communication has been received. Server malfunctions, power outages, and other technological impediments occasionally occur and this issue can be avoided only by using direct communication.

If you are seeking information, would like to set up an appointment for personal counseling, or are interested in other services we provide, please contact our front desk. In any urgent or emergency situation contact our front desk, or come by our office, and ask for the counselor on-call. If it is after 5:00 or on the weekend, please call Campus Police at 828.227.8911 and ask for the counselor on-call, and a member of our team will contact you.

Cellular Phones

Cellular phones cannot be a guaranteed secure means of communication. If you provide a cell phone number as a contact number please be aware that confidentiality cannot be ensured. Additionally, during business hours our staff generally makes phone calls via ground lines, which are reasonably secure. However, in some cases, when responding to an emergency request for assistance the counselor on call may respond via cell phone. In this case your privacy can not be guaranteed. If reasonable and appropriate to the urgency and level of risk of the client, counselors will make an effort to indicate if they are calling you on a cell phone so that you may decide if you would like to continue the conversation with the counselor at that time, or wait until a counselor can get to a regular phone. If you are concerned about this issue you may contact Appalachian Community Services 24-hour line at 888.315.2880 and speak to one of the

counselors there. Please clarify with any community resource about their electronic communications equipment and procedures if you have privacy concerns.

About our Internet Site (Web Pages)

The CAPS website is available as a resource about our services and to provide limited educational material only; we do not provide online counseling or emergency assistance. We may provide some links to other internet sites which we hope will be helpful, we do not necessarily endorse all information provided by other sites. We do make an attempt to maintain updated quality internet addresses (links), we do not assume any responsibility for the reliability or the functioning of these sites. Please evaluate any information you are presented with and do not use any internet site as a substitute for professional assistance or in lieu of obtaining full information. For personal assistance, or if you have mental health questions that we may be able to assist with, please contact CAPS at 828.227.7469. When possible, we will have a brief meeting with students to provide educational material. If you are concerned about yourself or someone else, please call us to set up a consultation or initial appointment.