



# Fraser River Counselling

## Privacy Policy

Privacy is an important principle of Fraser River Counselling. We take every effort to safeguard the privacy of individuals in the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personal information. The following is a description of the privacy policy for Fraser River Counselling centres.

### **Who are we?**

Fraser River Counselling is a learning environment for the student-counsellors in the Master of Arts Counselling Psychology Program. This means that the students will be working as a team with other student-counsellors and a supervisor, who is an established professional. Although your counselling is normally one-on-one with the same counsellor each week, the supervisor and the student-counsellor team will have access to your file. The supervisor and other team members are also available to support you. The team also views portions of your therapeutic sessions through video camera. All the information obtained during these sessions is kept strictly confidential among that team with the exceptions of the circumstances listed in the section on disclosure.

### **What is Personal Information?**

According to British Columbia's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), personal information refers to information about an identifiable individual. Personal information includes information that relates to an individual's personal characteristics (e.g., name, date of birth, home address and telephone number), health (e.g., presenting problem, health history, health services received by the individual, social situation) or activities, views and opinions (e.g., opinions expressed by an individual, an opinion or evaluation of an individual).

### **How do we use your Personal Information?**

Our primary purpose in obtaining personal information is to provide counselling services to adult individuals, children, adolescents, couples, and families in a responsible and professional manner. As part of the intake process, we collect information about your name, date of birth, address, family, history of substance use, suicidality, and abuse, as well as your psychological, medical, and legal history. This helps our counsellors assess what your needs are and to collaborate treatment plans with you. We may also use your personal information to collaborate with your other health care professionals. We will not do this without your consent. Your personal information will also be used to provide you receipts for services at your request.

As a rule, Fraser River Counselling does not collect personal information without your consent, but this might occur in an emergency (e.g., a client is unconscious) or where it is believed you would consent if asked and it is impractical to obtain consent (e.g., the client is in the midst of a crisis situation).

If you choose at any time to provide personal information such as your name, contact information (i.e. email address or telephone number) or any other personal information via email, on-line form, paper-and-pencil format, or otherwise, be assured that this information will never be given out, sold to advertisers, or used for any purpose other than to support our direct services.

### **How do we collect Personal Information?**

Personal information is collected from clients or members of the general public by various means including verbal exchange (i.e. over the telephone or in face-to-face meetings), paper-and-pencil forms, voice mail, email and online forms through our website (i.e. intake questionnaire).

Fraser River Counselling does not collect any private, personally identifiable information about you without your knowledge. This website collects only the personal information you provide and only uses that information for the purpose you provided it (e.g., to respond to email, to be put on the wait list for services, etc.). We do not require the collection of personal information in order for you to access the information and services on this website.

Individuals associated with Fraser River Counselling will contact you for the following reasons:

- a) In response to a question or suggestion initiated by you;
- b) To arrange services (i.e. scheduling appointments, discussing fees, providing directions, etc.);
- c) To facilitate ongoing services (i.e. discussing treatment plans).

### **Under what circumstances do we disclose Personal Information?**

Fraser River Counselling will not reveal your personal information to any other third party without your written permission, with some exceptions to this policy which are outlined below.

There are certain situations which may require Fraser River Counselling to disclose your personal information in accordance with ethical and legal requirements and standard business practices. These are also outlined in the informed consent for services found on our website. The following circumstances may result in disclosure of your personal information without your consent:

- 1) In cases where a person is subject to a foreseeable and imminent risk of bodily harm or death, a duty exists to protect the safety of such person(s). This means Fraser River Counselling may need to disclose confidential information to appropriate authorities or individuals who can intervene on behalf of the person(s) at risk. The person(s) at risk may be a client of Fraser River Counselling or may be someone associated with the client who is at imminent risk of bodily harm or death because of a client's actions.
- 2) If a child, vulnerable adult, or elder are being abused/neglected. In most circumstances, suspicion of abuse requires that a report is made.
- 3) Confidential client records can be subpoenaed by a court of law.
- 4) Personal information disclosed by minors (18 years of age or younger). Parents or legal guardians of a minor have right of access to information about their dependent during provision of services. There are exceptions to this rule (i.e. in the case of mature minors).

### **How do we protect Personal Information?**

Paper information is secured in a locked and restricted area. Electronic hardware is kept in a secured and locked area at all times. In addition, the computers and video-recording software are separately password-protected. The counsellors are trained to collect, use and disclose personal information only as necessary to fulfill their duties and in accordance with this privacy policy.

### **Do we retain Personal Information?**

Fraser River Counselling is required to keep client files for seven years following the clients' termination of services. If the client was a minor at the time of termination, the file is kept for seven years following the day they become 19 years of age.

If you complete an intake form, but do not follow through with receiving services, your intake form is kept for one year and then securely destroyed. You can request to have your information destroyed immediately.

Paper files containing personal information are destroyed by shredding. Electronic files containing personal information are destroyed by deleting them. When the hardware is discarded, the hard drive is physically destroyed.

### **How do you access/correct Personal Information?**

You have the right to know what information is contained about you in your record. You have access to information which that pertains to you (and only you), which is stored in your record. If you request this information, we will need confirmation of identify. If you believe there is a mistake in the information about you that Fraser River Counselling has on file, you have the right to ask for this information to be corrected.

Fraser River Counselling reserves the right to change the terms of this privacy policy and to make new policy provisions effective for all personal information maintained by Fraser River Counselling.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Intake Worker at (604) 513-2113, ext. 1.