



Empowering Women to improve the quality  
of their lives and fulfil their potential

# Sydney Women's Counselling Centre Client Information Rights & Responsibilities

It is important for you to be well informed about counselling and know your rights and responsibilities, in order for you to receive the best service this Centre can offer. Please ask staff if there is anything in this booklet you do not understand or need more information about

## Who we are

The Sydney Women's Counselling Centre is a community-based, non-government organisation (NGO) which has provided specialist trauma informed counselling to women for nearly three decades.

## Our vision and purpose

All women are empowered and supported in our community.

Our purpose is to deliver trauma-informed mental health, addiction and domestic violence services to assist women to meet their physical, emotional, social and economic potential.

## Our aims

We work through a feminist framework to advance women's health and well-being, and access to social justice.

We recognise that health and wellbeing are outcomes of Social Determinants and gender inequality. We were a part of change when we were founded and we continue to be a part of change in our community

***At Sydney Women's Counselling Centre we don't look at individuals as the problem.***

***Rather than asking women  
"What's the problem with you?"***

***We ask women  
"What happened to you?"  
"What did you have to do to survive?"***

## Sydney Women's Counselling Centre provides

- **Trauma informed counselling and casework**
- A **safe** physical and emotional environment
- **free of charge** services to women
- **Short and long-term counselling**
- **No GP** referral requirement
- Support for ongoing access to **social justice**
- A voice for women in our community, and
- Sustainable, feminist women's' health services

## Our clients

We work with women from across Sydney, regardless of their circumstances. Predominantly, our clients are on low incomes, from Non-English speaking backgrounds, with high rates of chronic mental health conditions and limited access to health services.

Our clients are seeking support in managing complex and often intertwined issues including:

- domestic and family violence
- adult and child sexual assault
- trauma
- mental health issues including depression, anxiety, stress,
- suicide, disordered eating, self-harm, and low self esteem
- alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, gambling and other addictions
- social exclusion
- family and relationships including family law issues
- disability support
- job loss, homelessness and other housing concerns
- migration and settlement concerns
- chronic pain

## Counselling for Women by Women

Counsellors at Sydney Women's Counselling Centre (SWCC) all have professional qualifications; work with an integrative style and holistic approach. They may use a range of techniques that are drawn from different counselling models, which are utilized within the framework of the Social Determinants of Health and Trauma Informed Care.



**Counselling** is a professional relationship between a counsellor and a client where the client is treated with respect and positive regard and where the client can freely discuss their concerns in a safe and confidential space

**Counselling may include the following:**

- Being listened to in a non-judgmental manner
- Being helped to find your own solutions to your problems in a supportive, collaborative way.
- Being helped to explore and understand your life and your circumstances
- Being helped to increase your self-acceptance and self-care
- Being helped to build social and support networks in your life
- Being helped to achieve the specific changes and personal goals you identified for yourself
- Being helped to reduce unwanted symptoms such as anxiety or depression
- Being helped to cut back or stop addictive behaviors
- Being helped to cope and rebuild your life after a specific event such as a significant loss (through death or separation from a loved one), or series of events or traumas that have left you feeling stuck and unable to manage your life anymore.
- Being helped to rebuild your relationship with yourself and others.
- Being helped to understand how childhood issues currently impact on your relationships and emotional wellbeing
- Being helped to cope with a wide variety of family problems



**Counselling is not**

- About being 'rescued' by the therapist
- Advice giving
- Therapist giving answers or solutions
- Psychiatric treatment
- Social chit-chat/lonely hearts club
- Always "warm and comfortable"
- A friendship relationship, even after therapy finishes.

**Expectations**

Most women who have come to the Centre have reported positive benefits such as: feeling less isolated, more empowered, more confident to make decisions and the healing power from being heard non-judgmentally. It's important you discuss feelings with your counsellor so that you both can work towards management of feelings and safety within the process

**At the commencement of counselling, you can expect your counsellor to discuss with you the counselling process, your goals and your readiness to make a commitment at this time in order to come to a plan that can meet your needs.**

**Cancellations and No Shows**

The Centre seeks to be as flexible as possible but cannot hold spaces when there is a pattern of cancellations and/or no shows. Please note, frequent cancellations/FTS may result in your counselling being terminated. If irregular attendance is an issue your counsellor will discuss other options that may suit your circumstances better until you are able to attend regularly. .

- Advise the Centre as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your booked appointment
- SWCC will make all reasonable attempts to contact you asap if the counsellor will be absent

Victim Services and Medicare Service programs are time limited by statutory regulations. Session frequency is agreed on between the counsellor and client to achieve maximum benefit within prescribed number of session's constraints.

## Rights and Responsibilities

At the commencement of counselling you can expect your counsellor to clearly explain, the Centre's Rights and Responsibilities agreement, and to answer any questions you may have.

Clients have a right to

- quality and **respectful health care**
- **privacy and confidentiality.** Any personal information provided by you to the Centre (e.g. name, address, date of birth and contact details) including any information given to us in the course of counselling will be protected. All identifying information is coded and kept in a secure place. Personal information will not be released to a third party without your signed consent except in the case of
  - Legal subpoena of your file except in cases of disclosed sexual assault where the NSW Privileges under the evidence Amendment (Confidential Communication) Act 1997 applies.
  - The disclosure of knowledge or suspicions of a child being abused or at risk of abuse
  - The disclosure of serious illegal activities (e.g. murder or arson)
  - You or another person are at risk of serious harm
- **access any personal information** that the Centre may hold in the form of files. (You can ask your counsellor for the procedure to obtain this information.)
- **make a complaint**, without fear of reprisal
- **consent to or refuse** any counselling offered
- **refuse to take part in any research** or to decide not to be taped or videoed if requested
- **refuse the services of a student counsellor.**

(The Centre will inform you if a counsellor is an intern in training)



## Occupation Health & Safety

Staff and clients at the SWCC have a right to a safe environment.

We ask your cooperation in maintaining a safe physical and emotional space for women by

- Observance of the Centre's "**Women Only**" space policy.

(Men, coming to the Centre other than service providers/tradesmen will be asked to leave the premises.)

Not committing violence towards yourself or others or any property at Centre.

- Not smoking whilst at Centre
- Not using drugs or alcohol in the Centre, or attending intoxicated

## Free Service & Donations

We are a non-profit organization and **do not charge fees for our services.** Medicare and Victim Service providers either bulk bill or are remunerated directly from government programs. Donations are encouraged and appreciated (any donation over \$2.00 is tax deductible) All donations will go toward furthering Sydney Women's Counselling Centre's resources in order to improve service for clients. Credit cards accepted

## Gifts

During counselling clients sometimes want to express their appreciation by giving a gift. Counsellors at SWCC abide by high standards of professional practice and do not expect or encourage gifts and may refuse a gift if it is of substantial value or of a personal nature.

## Interpreter

Interpreter services are available on request, but there are often limitations accessing specific languages and ongoing service. Please let us know in advance if you require an interpreter.

## Waiting Area

Clients are encouraged to read the resource information on display in the waiting area. Regular program updates from a wide network of community organizations are also available. Complaints protocols are also displayed.

## Complaints

Should you have a complaint about any aspect of service, including MSP and VS provider programs please raise it with your counsellor. If, you are still not satisfied with the outcome, please use the Centre Complaint form or contact the Manager directly. In the event that you still remain unsatisfied, the Manager will refer you to an external agency (Health Care Commission) in order for you to pursue your complaint.

## Childcare

Children cannot be accommodated at SWCC. It is the responsibility of the client to arrange appropriate childcare for the duration of her session.

Occasional childcare is available adjacent to us at the Carrington Occasional Child Care Centre (9787 9844)

between 8.30am and 4.30pm. You will need to ring one week in advance to secure your booking

## Data Collection

As part of our funding arrangements, this service has agreed to collect demographic and other relevant information about all our clients for use on National and State wide data bases. Statistical information is released publicly as summary data (individuals cannot be identified from summary data) and is used to monitor trends and to inform research planning and evaluation.

Under the requirements of privacy legislation we are required to obtain your consent for your information to be included

## Outcome Measurement

As part of our funding arrangements, this service has agreed to administer outcome measurement tools when you first start counselling and then periodically (around every 25 sessions) thereafter. You can ask your counsellor for more information about these tools at any time

## Length of Counselling

While SWCC counselling programs can provide you with weekly counselling for up to 2 years , your initial counselling contract will be for **10 sessions**.

**For ongoing sessions there will be a review at 25 sessions and thereafter every 25 sessions** where you and your counsellor can determine options around continuing or not. You can end counselling at any time.

## Medicare and Victim Services Programs

Under individual arrangements, SWCC is able to offer, Medicare Bulk Billing counselling and Victim Services counselling. While Medicare and Victim Service counsellors are not employed by SWCC, they work at the Centre as part of our team, and are bound by the Centre's policies and procedures beyond the statutory requirements of these programs.

**Medicare Service providers require a Mental Health Care Plan and a GP referral.**

**Victim Services clients require an Victim Services Counselling Approval.**

## Online counselling

While SWCC is primarily a face to face counselling service we can provide online (zoom) and telephone counselling as an alternative option in instances where barriers such as distance, work or other life issues make it difficult to attend the Centre for face to face counselling, which remains best practice and the most effective format for counselling. You can talk to your counsellor about this option.

## Support letters

Counsellors can provide support letters/reports you may require, however our usual practice is that there is a **minimum of 6 sessions attended** before support letters are available. This is to ensure that your circumstances are supported with your counsellor's best insight and advocacy.

**Commencement/attendance statements** can also be provided, but these will be general in nature and lack required details you may be seeking.



**Empowering Women to improve  
the quality of their lives and fulfill  
their potential**

## Work & Development Orders

SWCC is a registered WDO provider that can assist you to repay State Revenue debts through attending counselling. This service is only available to ongoing clients in counselling and is not a stand-alone service.

## Disability Access

SWCC has an access ramp and disabled toilet facilities on the premises. Please advise your counsellor if you have mobility issues and we will organize an easy access counselling room for your sessions.

## Overlapping Counselling

While it is common place to be engaged with multiple service providers to meet your various needs, it is not considered to be therapeutically best practice to have simultaneous counselling with another clinician unless it has been organized for a specific purpose outside the brief of your counselling at SWCC. Let your counsellor know if you are seeing another clinician so that you can discuss options to proceed or go on hold.

## Outreach Services

SWCC counsellors are unable to provide off site face to face counselling. Outreach services are only available in our case management program.

## Crisis Services

SWCC is not a crisis service. We will always do our best to respond to crisis situations but you can expect we will refer you on to more appropriate services asap.

## Bilingual Counselling

SWCC has a Mandarin/Cantonese counselling program in place. Depending on language proficiency of current staff at the Centre you may also be able to have counselling in other languages.

## Pets

Pets are generally not permitted on the premises. Some arrangements can be made if your pet is a therapeutic support. Let your counsellor know if this is the case.

## Holidays /leave

The Centre is closed for 2 weeks over Xmas/New year. Your counsellor will provide you with a list of alternative contacts you may require during this closure period.

If your counsellor is on annual leave or is ill for a period more than 2 weeks, the Centre will either provide you with care taking counselling or engage a locum counsellor for longer periods of time.

## Returning Clients

Coming to the end of counselling can be a difficult transition for both client and counsellor but is a necessary milestone and can represent an important achievement and or an opportunity to test out your acquired skills and empowerment.

Clients of the Centre can return for another episode of counselling after a 3 month break or can just chose to touch base with their counsellor from time to time for a brief intervention.

## Research

The Centre is often asked for client participation in research projects. Research is a vital tool in building our evidence base and realizing our voice on many important issues you have come to counselling for. Notice of research projects is displayed in the waiting area and we encourage clients to discuss participation with their counsellor.



## Family

While family can be an important and supportive part of your life (or not), as a rule we will not discuss your counselling with family members.

Your counselling is for you. We strongly discourage other family members seeking counselling at the Centre at the same time as you.

## Casework

Oftentimes clients require casework to assist with practical needs as well as counselling to support emotional wellbeing and increased capacity. Your counsellor can only offer you limited casework as part of your counselling and may refer you on for casework needs. The SWCC casework program works with counselling in an integrated way. You can expect your counsellor and caseworker to share information and support you to achieve your therapeutic and practical goals. SWCC counsellors do their best to work with external caseworkers as well.

## Covid-19/Illness

SWCC is recognized a NSW Health provider and as such we are governed by government mandates. Covid-19 risk management policies and procedures are in place at the Centre and we ask your cooperation in keeping us all safe. If you are Covid positive or just not well please don't come to the Centre. Let us know and we can organize online counselling while you are recovering

## Behavior and a Safe Environment for All

People from all walks of life, nationality and sexual orientation attend the Centre. We ask you to be respectful to all who you share the waiting area with.



## Referrals

Counsellors can only provide very limited advice on legal, medical and other specialized areas but will do their best to facilitate referrals for you as are required.

## Feedback

Your feedback is very important. It not only helps us stay on track with our services but is an integral part of reporting our value to our funding bodies. The Centre conducts an annual client survey in April/May and a YES survey in November each year. Our feedback book is in the waiting area at all times. All comments you make are de-identified and are used in our "What the Clients Say" publication.

**Our Policies and Procedures** Sydney Women's Counselling Centre has based its approach to delivering its service in accordance with the "Social Model of Health" /Principles of Women's Health.

The issue(s) that have brought you to counselling are often part of an individual, and more universal, complex mix of factors/issues and circumstances which can impact on each other, to cause, contribute to or maintain your presenting issue(s).

Counselling here at Sydney Women's Counselling Centre, aims to assist your own empowerment in better managing and/or resolving presenting concerns, and commonly involves working with underlying issues that may emerge during the course of counselling. This approach helps your counsellor to work together with you as a whole person in the framework of your own history, culture and family background, in achieving your counselling goals and improving your overall wellbeing and quality of life.

At the core of our practice, we undertake

- Prevention, early intervention and capacity building and trauma recovery
- All our practitioners are registered with professional associations and are required to undertake specialized training programs
- We engage in ongoing research and development within our practice areas with several universities and professional bodies.
- We engage in our local and wider community, to ensure our services reflect their needs, and we can be a voice for clients

## Our Governance

We work as an independent Health Centre, within the Women's Health NSW Consortium.

The Centre is incorporated as a community, not for profit organisation and registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission

The Centre has held continuous accreditation for over 25 years through QIP and the Australian Service Excellence Standards certification program.

## Funding

Our programs are funded through government grants, corporate and community donations SWCC is primarily funded by NSW Health (SLHD)

The Department of Community & Justice (DCJ)

## Office Hours

The Centre is open from 9am to 4.30pm. There is no after-hours service available, but you can leave a voice message on 02 97181955 and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Alternatively you can send us an email.

[help@womenscounselling.com.au](mailto:help@womenscounselling.com.au)

### HOW TO FIND US



We are located 5 minutes walk from Campsie Railway Station (Bankstown Line)

Bus Services: 400 (accessible for people with disabilities), 412, 413, 487, 492, 494

Address: 4/2 Carrington Square Campsie  
Website: [www.womenscounselling.com.au](http://www.womenscounselling.com.au)

## Emergency Numbers

- \* Lifeline (24 hr) **131 114**
- \* Beyond Blue Info Line 1300 224 636
- \* Rape & domestic Violence Services Australia (Full Stop 1800 737 732 (24 hrs)
- \* Domestic Violence Counselling & Advice) 1800 656 463
- \* Linked2home Homeless Person's Information Line 1800152.152
- \* Dept. of Justice Helpline for Child at Risk 132 111
- \* Kids Helpline- 1800 55 1800
- \* Gamble Aware -1800 858 858
- \* Alcohol and Drug Information Service- 93618000
- \* Family Drug Support -1300 368186
- \* Mental Health Access line 1800 011 511
- \* Family Relationship Advice Line 1800 05032.1
- \* Victim-Services Access Line: 1800 633 063 (24 Hr)
- \* Grief Support Line: 9489 6644

### Sydney Women's Counselling Centre

*Acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which this workplace operates the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and pays respect to all elders past present and future.*

Among the most important of the Aboriginal artwork sites in Canterbury Bankstown is a rock shelter located at Undercliff. Archaeologists have labelled this site as a rarity in the Sydney region and the paintings and etching are believed to be 1,000 to 5,000 years old



SWCC has held continuous accreditation since 1990, Australian Service Excellence Standards from 2012

