

What is Counselling?

Individual, Couples or Family Counselling

Counselling is a private and safe space where individuals, couples and families talk with a counsellor about issues and problems they are experiencing. RAV counsellors are trained to provide confidential and non-judgemental counselling that assists you to explore options and make decisions that are right for you.

Process, Counselling Sessions and Fees

Assessment - Each person participating in the counselling process will take part in an individual assessment with the allocated counsellor. Assessment sessions will be 50 minutes long and do not count towards the number of counselling sessions offered.

Counselling sessions: After your assessment, if the allocated counsellor determines that counselling is appropriate, you will be offered a counselling appointment. Where counselling relates to couples in relationships or family counselling, the counsellor will explain their recommendations for the course of counselling to you (i.e. parties attending separately or jointly). A case review of your counselling sessions will take place throughout the process and on case closure. All counselling processes (individual, couples, or families) may continue for up to 20 counselling sessions per counselling stream to a maximum of 12 months after your assessment date.

At the end of your counselling sessions, you may be provided with referral pathways or other options consistent with the closure plan established between you and the counsellor. Future opportunities to participate in counselling may be available to you on request for a new assessment no earlier than three (3) months after the end of your counselling sessions.

Missed Sessions: If you do not attend 3 sessions in total without prior notice to the service, your counselling sessions will be reviewed, and your counselling file may be closed.

Fees: Where applicable, associated fees and methods of payment will be discussed and agreed with the client prior to commencement of therapy.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

Your counsellor may take notes during sessions as part of their duty of care, to ensure best practice and to comply with organisational requirements. These notes and anything discussed in the counselling sessions are confidential. Relationships Australia does not provide written reports.

The limits to confidentiality of the counselling process are:

- A court orders the counsellor to disclose.
- You (and any person you participate in counselling with) consent to the information being disclosed.
- The counsellor suspects that child abuse has occurred or there is risk of child abuse.
- There is a serious risk to you or others health life and / or safety.
- A lawyer independently represents a child's interests under an Order made under s68L of the Family Law Act 1975- to assist the lawyer to do so properly.

Evidence of anything said, or any admission made, by or in the company of a family counsellor conducting family counselling, is not generally admissible as evidence in any legal proceedings under the Family Law Act 1975. This also applies to anything said by, or in the company of a professional to whom you may be referred during the family counselling process.

However, if there is an admission by an adult or a disclosure by a child, that indicates that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, then that admission or disclosure may be admissible as evidence in legal proceedings under the Family Law Act.

Privacy and Storage of your Records

Client records/material are stored securely for a period of seven (7) years from the date of last contact with RAV, or in the case of a child under

the age of 18, until that person reaches the age of 25. After these specified periods, client records/materials (hard copy and electronic) are securely destroyed.

Obligations of the Counsellor

1. Ensure client privacy and confidentiality and always maintain a professional relationship.
2. Will not enter a personal or sexual relationship with the client at any time.
3. Will not accept from or give gifts to clients (i.e. cards, flowers etc).

Obligations of the Client

1. Advise RAV of cancellation or reschedule requests 24 hours or as soon as reasonably practicable prior to their appointment.
2. While participating in video sessions will not intentionally disclose meeting passcodes/passwords to a third party without the consent of the Counsellor.
3. Will not record, take screen shots or photographs of sessions.
4. Will communicate with RAV staff respectfully.

Children on the Premises

RAV does not have an appropriate environment to care for children in the waiting areas. A responsible adult must accompany any child who attends our premises, as staff cannot take responsibility for children while parents are in a session.

Counselling for People who may be Affected by Separation

In discussions involving the welfare of children, the counsellor may, if appropriate to do so, provide a more advisory role to help clients keep the best interests of their child(ren) as their primary consideration, consistent with the principles of the *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*.

It is not the role of the practitioner to provide specific legal advice, but the practitioner may

provide general legal information and information about parenting arrangements following separation.

Your counsellor will inform you that you should regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration and encourage you to act in the child's best interest by applying the considerations set out in s60CC(2) and (3) of the *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*.

Complaints

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the counselling service, you have received and wish to express a concern or make a complaint.

- Raise it with the counsellor if they are directly involved; or
- Raise it directly with the Centre Manager, either face to face or in writing.

If a complaint remains unresolved, you can make a complaint to RAV's Complaints and Feedback Officer who will review, investigate, and respond to the complaint or feedback (positive or negative) at: feedback@rav.org.au

Feedback and Suggestions

We also welcome any suggestions you may have to improve our service. Suggestions boxes are in the foyers of all our centres. We encourage you to share your feedback by completing one of our forms available at reception or in the waiting room.

RAV Training and Interns

RAV is a training organisation and, as such, your practitioner be accompanied by an intern or student during some of your sessions. RAV counselling interns are required to comply with RAV policies and procedures and are held to the same standards privacy and confidentiality as RAV staff. Please let your practitioner know if you would prefer the intern/student to observe from a separate room via video or if you are not comfortable with their attendance.

Recordings and Observations

Recording of an appointment/session or any other communication with a RAV employee, using any form of electronic device, is not permitted unless:

- with your written consent, for professional supervision or related purposes after which all recordings are deleted once the supervision, reflection or feedback has occurred.
- you have the written approval of the counsellor;
- all persons being recorded have knowledge and provide consent before being recorded.

Telephone and Video Counselling Service

For video and telephone counselling to be effective and confidential, you must ensure you attend your session from a quiet and private space. This ensures no other person can overhear your session.

Children are not permitted to be present and/or within hearing of your telephone or video session.

Your counsellor may ask identification questions to ensure that they are speaking with the intended client.

Your counsellor will not be able to proceed with an appointment if you are operating a vehicle or machinery during your session and will invite you to reschedule your appointment.

Acknowledgement

We require clients to read and understand this statement before they commence their counselling sessions.

Related Documents

RAV Child Safety Website Documents found at About Us / Child and Youth Safety (Our commitment to the safety of children and young people, Children and young people's safety code of conduct, How to make a complaint) Family Law Act 1975, Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)