Student Counseling at Princeton Theological Seminary

Overview

Princeton Theological Seminary’s Student Counseling (online at www.ptsem.edu/current/healthresources/studentcounseling/) recognizes that seminary is a place of crossroads, and of deepening and formation in every dimension, including the theological, the vocational, the relational, and the psychological. The opportunities and challenges that are part of seminary training encourage students and spouses to stretch and grow. Preparation for ministry includes good self-care and relationship care. Indeed, effective ministry is not just a function of knowledge and skills, but interpersonal capability and emotional and spiritual health. Strengths such as self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, internalization of grace, empathy, ability to deal with anger and pain, clear communication, and confidence can be developed in the safety of counseling and support group settings.

Eligibility and Fees

There are three levels of counseling provided by the Seminary: (1) on-campus services, (2) the first 10 counseling sessions at Trinity Counseling Service; and (3) mental health and counseling benefits provided to students covered by the Student Health Benefits Plan. On-campus counseling at the Seminary is available for all students. Services for couples or the spouse of the eligible student are also provided. These services are partially funded by the comprehensive fee.

There is no charge for the first session. Effective for 2007–08, a copayment of $5 per session will be required for up to 10 sessions, and a copayment of $10 is required for sessions 10 and beyond. This charge is not an eligible expense under the SHBP. Because of the high demand for counseling, the director of student counseling will often meet for an initial session and help make an appropriate referral to an on-campus contract therapist, to Trinity Counseling Service, or to a therapist in the Specialty Counseling Network (accessible through the SHBP). In some instances, such as renewal of an existing prescription medication, students may be directed to Princeton Primary and Urgent Care Center. Students covered by the SHBP should refer to the Schedule of Benefits in this brochure for outpatient mental health care benefits.

The copayment schedule for services provided or arranged by Student Counseling at PTS is as follows.

- **On-Campus Counseling**
  - First on-campus counseling session: $0
  - Sessions 2 through 10: $5 (no insurance applies)
  - Sessions 11 and beyond: $10 (no insurance applies)

- **Spiritual Direction**
  - Individual spiritual direction (student not covered by SHBP): $20 to $45
  - Individual spiritual direction (student covered by SHBP): $10 to $15

- **Groups Arranged by PTS**
  - Spiritual direction or psychotherapy groups (student not covered by SHBP): $7
  - Spiritual direction or psychotherapy groups (student covered by SHBP): $5

Location and Accessibility

On-campus counseling takes place in Scheide Hall, which is a handicapped-accessible building.

Hours of Service, Appointments, and Contact Information

Counseling is available between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, with limited evening hours. Sessions are typically 50 minutes. To schedule a first appointment, fill out an availability form and issue checklist on the table next to the reception window in Scheide Hall, and leave it with the office assistant. The director of student counseling will email you with an appointment time. If you need an emergency appointment, come to Scheide Hall or call 497.7844 or 497.7890. Please send email to nancy.schongalla@ptsem.edu if you have questions about counseling options or need to reschedule an appointment.
The Reverend Nancy Schongalla-Bowman, Director

On-campus counseling and support groups are available through Nancy Schongalla-Bowman, director of student counseling. The Reverend Schongalla-Bowman has provided pastoral counseling at Princeton Seminary since 1995, is a PTS alumna (Class of 1979), is licensed in New Jersey, and is also a supervisor in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, a parent, a stepparent, a grandmother, and is part of a clergy couple.

Her approach to counseling is holistic and eclectic with a family-systems base. She has pursued additional training in sex therapy and marital therapy, Gestalt and Christian healing approaches, inner-child work, and many other traditional and nontraditional modalities.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Information discussed in counseling is confidential and can only be shared with explicit, written permission from the client. However, in certain extreme instances, confidentiality becomes secondary to a concern for life. In the rare event that injury to self or to others is an imminent danger, a breach of confidentiality is required to take the appropriate steps to ensure safety.

Common Counseling Issues

Students and spouses often address a wide range of issues in counseling. These include:

- stress
- anxiety
- depression
- academic and vocational concerns
- dating
- premartial, marital, and parenting challenges
- sexuality
- faith issues
- family of origin problems
- compulsive behaviors
- low self-esteem
- boundary-setting
- health problems
- perfectionism/procrastination
- eating disorders
- abuse
- grief and loss
- trauma

Many drawn to the helping professions have experienced significant personal pain. What makes an effective wounded healer is not the wound, but the healing and growth that have been gained.

Faith Formation and Spiritual Direction

Some people come to counseling for guidance in faith development, spiritual disciplines, or discernment of call. While students are encouraged to talk about their faith in counseling, individual and group spiritual direction also provide a unique setting for exploring these issues. Local spiritual directors are available to help students and spouses deepen their capacity to “listen for God” in and out of the classroom, in all of life’s experiences. Information about spiritual direction at PTS is available through the Office of Student Counseling, the Office of the Chapel, the Office of Student Relations, the Office of Field Education, and the Office of Multicultural Relations. Group direction is arranged through the Office of the Chapel. Please refer to the new SHBP in-network coverage for individual and group spiritual direction benefits (page 12).

Support Groups, Seminars, and Speakers

The director of student counseling and the student-led Wholistic Health Initiative often work together to promote wellness. Annual events include a fall Wholistic Health Fair, stress management seminars, and a spring mini-retreat. As needs arise, the director of student counseling arranges speakers or support and psychotherapy groups to address particular issues such as eating disorders, depression, self-integration, compulsive sexuality, releasing emotions through the Sedona Method, family of origin, and marriage enrichment. Please refer to the SHBP in-network benefits for psychotherapy, support, and spiritual direction groups (page 12).

PSYCHOLOGICAL CRISIS

For life-threatening emergencies students should call 911 or, if appropriate, proceed directly to the nearest emergency room. The University Medical Center at Princeton is located at 253 Witherspoon Street in Princeton. Princeton House, the psychiatric branch of the University Medical Center, may be reached at 609.497.3355.

During on-campus business hours, call or come to Scheide Hall and let Teresa Heyer know there is an emergency situation. After hours, you may call 609.273.9727 or 609.273.9726. Security staff will come to the individual in crisis and contact the director of student counseling or one of the members of the Psychological Crisis Response Team. Community crisis hotlines are 609.896.8183 and 609.585.2244.