

## Five Things to Know

- 1** Wisconsin is one of many states with rules regarding the professional conduct of counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists.
- 2** It is illegal for these helping professionals to have sexual contact with clients.
- 3** While most helping professionals do not sexually exploit their clients, it does happen.
- 4** It is not your fault even if you wanted the sexual involvement with the helping professional.
- 5** There are many places to go to get information or to explore whether a helping professional's behavior is inappropriate, unethical, or illegal.

## Reporting Options

You may contact these agencies if you choose to report behavior of a helping professional that caused you discomfort.

**Department of Health Services  
Division of Care and Treatment Services**  
608-266-2717

[dhs.wisconsin.gov/clientrights](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/clientrights)

**Department of Health Services  
Division of Quality Assurance**  
800-642-6552

[dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide)

**Department of Safety and  
Professional Services  
Division of Legal Services  
and Compliance**  
608-266-2112

[dsps.wisconsin.gov/complaints](https://dsps.wisconsin.gov/complaints)

You may also report the helping professional's behavior to the person's supervisor, the clinic's client rights specialist, or local law enforcement.



Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

1 West Wilson Street  
Madison, WI  
608-266-2717

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Mental Health | Substance Use

## In Wisconsin, Treatment Never Includes Sex



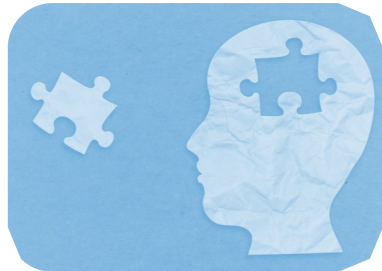
**You have a right to be free  
from sexual contact during  
treatment.**

## The Law Protects You

When you get help for mental health and substance use, it is important that the person helping you is honest and does not take advantage of you. Most people providing care and treatment are trustworthy, but not all. Some helping professionals seek to develop a romantic relationship with their clients. This is wrong.

In Wisconsin, it is illegal for a helping professional to have sexual contact with you while they are helping you with your mental health or substance use concerns. It does not matter if the contact happens during a consultation, examination, interview, or treatment. (Wis. Stat. § 940.22).

You have the right to have another helping professional report the sexual contact to the Department of Safety and Professional Services. If you are the age of consent, they must get your written permission before they report the sexual contact, and they may not tell anyone your name unless you say it is okay.



## Warning Signs

In most cases, sexual contact does not happen suddenly. Usually the helping professional slowly changes their behaviors to see how you will react. This is known as grooming.



Behaviors to watch for:

- Acts and talks in a sexually suggestive way.
- Discusses their personal life or problems in detail.
- Extends your session time.
- Schedules appointments when no one else is around.
- Says you need special treatment.
- Offers you special favors.
- Provides you drugs or alcohol.
- Gives you gifts often or gifts that cost a lot of money.

The following behaviors may or may not be okay. If you are uncomfortable with these actions, consider talking to your helping professional, their supervisor, or contact the agencies listed in this brochure.

- Hugs
- Touches
- Invites to meals and social activities
- Calls to check on you

## Support is Available

It is common to be unsure or have mixed feelings of what to do or who to trust. You may feel a special bond with your helping professional and want to protect them. Remember it is your right to be free from sexual contact during mental health and substance use treatment.

For information about your rights and to explore support and reporting options, you may contact one of these organizations.

### Disability Rights Wisconsin

800-928-8778

[disabilityrightswi.org](http://disabilityrightswi.org)

- Learn about your treatment rights
- Explore your reporting options

### Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

608-257-1516

[wcasa.org](http://wcasa.org)

- Learn about sexual assault
- Receive referrals to your local sexual assault service provider