

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information focusing on doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully, and let me know if you have any questions. This is in addition to the Client Information and Consent to Treatment forms. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

Telehealth refers to providing psychotherapy or psychiatric services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telehealth is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician is unable to continue to meet in person. Telehealth, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telehealth, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy/medication management sessions and telehealth, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telehealth sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact telehealth. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies. Please note that the platform we are using is called Doxy.me. It is HIPAA-compliant, does not permanently store Protected Health Information, and operates according to the Privacy and Security Rules.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in telehealth with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telehealth, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telehealth is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

We will decide together which kind of telehealth service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telehealth services. You will need to use your device's camera and microphone. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telehealth.

Confidentiality

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telehealth. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telehealth sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telehealth). Again, the platform that we use is HIPAA compliant.

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in the Client Information and Consent to Treatment form still apply in telehealth. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telehealth

We will schedule in-person sessions as indicated. I will let you know if I decide that telehealth is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telehealth than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telehealth services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 911, call our main office number 610-970-5234 and follow instructions for emergency calls, call Belmont Behavioral Health at 1-800-220-4357, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call me on the phone number I provided you 610-970-5234 ext. ____.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time. I will call you to resume our conversation. However, if you block anonymous calls, please turn off such blocking while you wait for a return call from confidential telephone numbers. Do not use email or texts for emergency communications.

Safety

No therapy will take place if you are driving. If you are scheduled for a session and are driving, please find a safe place to park before starting a session.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telehealth as apply for in-person psychotherapy. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic psychotherapy or psychiatric sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telehealth sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered. It is important to be on time. Cancellation policies are the same as written in our Financial Policy.

Records

The telehealth sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client

Date

Client's custodial (legal) guardian

Date

Client's custodial (legal) guardian

Date

Therapist

Date