

Informed Consent for Teletherapy

Teletherapy refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of teletherapy is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location.

Please note that the preferred method of service delivery at the IPC is in-person. Teletherapy is to be used only on a very limited basis and in extenuating circumstances (i.e. significant public health concerns, university guidance or mandate to limit in-person contact). Regular in-person services will resume as soon as possible. Teletherapy will not be available once the IPC resumes normal business practices. Despite the benefit of being able to continue services in extenuating circumstances, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and teletherapy, as well as some risks. For example:

Risks to confidentiality: Because teletherapy 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. Your therapist will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy, but it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for your session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your 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 teletherapy. 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.

Crisis management and intervention: Teletherapy is not the preferred method of service delivery for clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in teletherapy, you will develop an emergency response plan with your provider to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of teletherapy work.

Efficacy: Most research shows that teletherapy 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: You will decide together with your provider which kind of teletherapy service to use (from those approved by the IPC). You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use teletherapy services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you related to your participation in teletherapy (i.e. cell phone minutes, internet access, etc.).

Confidentiality: Providers have a legal and ethical responsibility to make their best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of teletherapy. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. Only HIPAA compliant means of communication will be used in an effort to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. Clients should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of therapy communications when possible.

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that were outlined in the initial IPC Informed Consent still apply in teletherapy. Please let your provider know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Emergencies and Technology: Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting teletherapy than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, your therapist will create an emergency plan before engaging in teletherapy services. This plan will likely include personal contacts/resources in addition to crisis community services and emergency providers.

To ensure your privacy and reduce the likelihood of your session being interrupted, your provider may ask you to identify your location. If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not attempt to call the provider back; instead, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. Contact your provider only after you have called for or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and your provider will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the agreed upon teletherapy platform. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then contact your provider directly via the information they provided to you.

Records: The teletherapy sessions **may be recorded** in accordance with a prior agreement made in writing by mutual consent. A written record of your session will be maintained temporarily in an encrypted manner on a secured flashdrive. The information will be downloaded into the IPC’s electronic medical record system on a once per week basis as long as this remains a safe option for the provider’s personal health.

Informed Consent: This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that was agreed upon at the outset of your clinical work at the IPC and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Signature of Client

Date

Print Name of Client

Signature of Provider

Date