

Informed Consent to Use Teletherapy

This Informed Consent for Teletherapy contains important information about engaging in counseling using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

What is Teletherapy?

“Teletherapy” is described as the provision of mental health services with the provider and recipient of services being in separate locations, and the services being delivered over electronic media (often videoconferencing or telephone).

Risks to Confidentiality

For your security and confidentiality, I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy, including conducting our session from a private location and protecting all communications that are a part of our teletherapy.

It is also **important for you to protect the privacy of our session** on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in teletherapy **only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear or interrupt the conversation**. You should take reasonable steps to **ensure the security of our communications**, including using secure networks for teletherapy sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for teletherapy. Despite all reasonable precautions, it could still be possible for our electronic communications to be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others.

Use of Technology

Successful use of teletherapy requires a minimum degree of technical competence on the part of both client and therapist. For video conferencing, **using a computer is the preferred mode of connection**. Phone or tablet can also work, but connections tend to be of lesser quality. It is **best to use wired connections** when possible, and if not available, then utilize the **strongest wireless connections available**.

Your computer might have problems that preclude a teletherapy session. You are strongly encouraged to make sure you have the **latest operating system and security updates**, including installation of current and up-to-date antivirus and internet security software, installed on the computer or smartphone you want to use for teletherapy sessions.

We will decide together which kind of teletherapy service to use, but you will be solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in teletherapy.

Technology can stop working during a session if the connection is not stable or the platform or devices malfunction. This could result in video freezing, audio being dropped, or the connection going black. If a stable connection cannot be adequately maintained, **it might be necessary to terminate the session**. I generally advise keeping your phone nearby when conducting video conferencing sessions. In the event that video technology fails, **we can troubleshoot by phone and/or continue the session via phone**.

Crisis Management and Intervention

Teletherapy might not be advisable for those who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. If this is the case, before engaging in teletherapy, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our teletherapy work. If a crisis situation arises during the course of our work via teletherapy, it might be necessary to discuss other ways for you to get help. I will help you locate those resources, if necessary. If an emergency situation were to arise, **I will use the emergency contact who you provided in your Client Intake form. If you would like me to**

use a different emergency contact, please let me know. If you are having an emergency and the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, do not call me back; instead, **call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.** Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

Appropriateness of Teletherapy

If we are engaging in regular teletherapy, we might schedule in-person sessions occasionally to “check-in” with one another. I will let you know if I believe that teletherapy is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. If this is the case, we will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Outcomes and Experience

The human to human connection when meeting via technology can feel different and sometimes less personal than when meeting in person. On the other hand, it can sometimes be easier to share vulnerable material when remote. **I am open and available to talk about any reactions you may have around this.**

Most research shows that teletherapy is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, there are non-verbal cues that can be more difficult for me to observe than in an in-person session, which could change my responses or interventions. Additionally, our connection quality can reduce the continuity of language transmission, which can be frustrating or interruptive at times.

Fees and Insurance

The same fee rates and policies will apply for teletherapy as apply for in-person counseling. Please be aware that it might be necessary to use part of our session time to address technological connection issues. I will assume that if video conferencing fails, we will use the phone. If a phone connection is not possible and we conducted half or less of our scheduled session time, I will prorate the fee.

While it is becoming more common for health insurance plans to reimburse for teletherapy sessions, it is possible that teletherapy sessions are not covered by your insurance. It is your responsibility to **check coverage of teletherapy with your insurance company.**

Records

Teletherapy 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.

Confidentiality

The extent of **confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality** that I outlined in my *Professional Disclosure and Informed Consent* form as well as the policies outlined in my *Communication Policy* form still apply in teletherapy. **All laws regarding the confidentiality of healthcare information and a patient's right to their medical information** also apply to teletherapy interactions. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the *Professional Disclosure and Informed Consent* form and *Communication Policy* form that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of those agreements. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client Signature _____ **Date** _____

Counselor Signature _____ **Date** _____