

Bridges and Pathways Counseling Services
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TELEMEDICINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Your therapist offers Telemedicine as a form of providing therapy services. Telemedicine has been proven to be as effective as face to face counseling and is an effective way for people to receive counseling services to help manage mental health symptoms, treat mental illness, and improve overall mental health.

Your therapist received necessary training to provide Telemedicine Services and will go through a process with you to determine if you are a good fit for receiving Telemedicine Services. Please note that over time your therapist may determine that you are no longer a candidate to receive such services. If it is determined that you are no longer a candidate to receive Telemedicine Services, you will be offered recommendations and referrals.

Safety is important to your therapist. You will need to verify your identity and be willing to follow set guidelines and safety practices to continue any form of counseling. Your therapist will use a HIPPA compliant, audio and video, two-way interactive website. The client and the therapist will use audiovisual telecommunications technology (computer or cellular phone). If you or your therapist are not able to access the dedicated website, there are measures in place during the Covid-19 shutdown that allow telemedicine via FaceTime, Zoom, regular telephone calls, and other sites.

This type of service is also referred to as “real-time” and may serve as a substitute for an in person session. You will need to provide your own computer or cellular phone, have access to email, and know some minor basics about using email. You will be required to have your own email address. Confidentiality is very important, and your therapist will follow all state and federal guidelines and take seriously using equipment that values your privacy.

If you would be interested in receiving Telemedicine Services you must complete a Risk Assessment with your therapist to determine if you are a good fit for Telemedicine. You must be willing to comply with standards of practicing safe Telemedicine services which include but are not limited to some of the following criteria:

Privacy Measures for the Client - (Expectations of the client):

- Avoid using mind altering substances prior to session
- Dress appropriately
- Hold the session in an appropriate room when attending a web based session
- Do not have anyone else in the room unless you first discuss it with your counselor

- Do not conduct other activities while in session, such as driving
- Do not bring any weapons of any kind to session
- Do not record sessions without first obtaining the provider's approval
- Be located within the state in which the clinician is licensed to practice (client should inform the clinician of their location)
- It is recommended that you sign on to your account at least 5 minutes prior to your session start time.
- You are responsible for initiating the connection with your provider at the time of your session unless you have made a different agreement with your provider.
- With the use of technology, it is important to be aware that family, friends, co-workers, employers, and hackers may have access to any technology, devices, or applications that you use
- Do not keep your therapist's contact information on your phone if it is synced with other accounts/applications.
- Notify your therapist if you suspect any breach in your security.

Emergency Management for Telemedicine

So that your therapist can get you help in the case of an emergency and for your safety, the following are important and necessary.

In addition, by signing this agreement form you are acknowledging that you understand and agree to the following:

1. You, the client, will inform your therapist, of the location in which you will be during our sessions.
2. You, the client, will identify, on your client information form, a person, whom your therapist, can contact in the case that your therapist believes you are at risk of harming yourself or others.
3. Depending on my assessment of risk, you, the client, or your therapist, may be required to verify that your emergency contact person is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and if your therapist deems necessary, call 911 and/or transport you to a hospital.

In addition, your therapist may assess, and therefore require, that you create a safe environment at your location during the entire time that you are in treatment with your therapist. This may mean disposing of all firearms and excess medication from your location.

Cost In most cases

Telemedicine is covered by insurance. Please remember, however, that any services you receive from your therapist that are not covered by insurance are ultimately your responsibility to pay. You may pay privately for Telemedicine Services. The same rates that apply for face to face therapy apply to Telemedicine Services. The cost savings for you comes in the form of saving on gas, vehicle wear, time, potential childcare costs, and/or time missed from work.

Safety and Patient-Provider Relationships

Clients should trust that their therapist will offer necessary information for them to make decisions about treatment. They should also expect competent care, assurance of privacy and confidentiality, and continuity of care. Providers' ethical responsibilities remain the same with Telemedicine, but differences in possible patient-provider interactions in Telemedicine have brought accountability and the patient provider relationship to the forefront in discussions about Telemedicine safety. As an avenue for service delivery, Telemedicine ideally would be integrated into regular, coordinated care and services.

Discontinuation of Telemedicine Services:

Your therapist will assess and discuss treatment to determine if in-person services, Telemedicine services or a combination of the two would be most appropriate.

Discontinuation of any of these services will be determined based on clinical judgment of treatment plan adherence, and/or treatment progress towards goals identified. Once a client has reached their goals according to their treatment plan, the clinician and client will work together towards discharge, or work toward creating a new treatment plan based on medical necessity.

To receive Telemedicine Services you must read this document; read and sign the "Telemedicine Informed Consent", and complete a "Telemedicine Assessment for Client Fit". If done electronically they will be entered into your electronic health record. If you complete them in the office, please return them to your therapist. Or you may sign them and mail them to your therapist's office for insertion into your electronic medical record.