



Informed Consent for Telehealth Counseling

The purpose of this document is to inform you, the client, about many aspects of telehealth counseling services (a) the process; (b) the counseling; (c) the potential risks and benefits of services; (d) safeguards against those risks; and (e) alternatives to telehealth counseling services. Please read this entire document and sign.

Process

Possible misunderstandings

The client should be aware that misunderstandings are possible with telephone, text-based modalities such as email, and real-time internet chat because many non-verbal cues are absent. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur due to connection problems causing image delays or less than optimal image or sound quality. Counselors observe human behavior and gather much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact, and other non-verbal cues. If you have never engaged in telehealth counseling before, please have patience with the process and clarify information if you think your counselor has not understood you well. Also, please be patient if your counselor asks for periodic clarification.

Turnaround time

At this time, Creative Counseling Group, PLC will not be using email or instant messaging for telehealth counseling. If we do ever begin to use asynchronous (not in "real-time") communication such as email or instant messaging, these services can involve a "lag" in response. The counselor will make every effort to respond to email requests within a 12- to 24-hour period. If the client is in a state of crisis or emergency, the counselor recommends the client contact a crisis line or an agency local to the client or 911. Clients may also utilize 1-800-332-4224 or 1-800-273-8255 (For the deaf or hard-of-hearing: 1-800-799-4TTY).

Privacy of the counselor

Although the internet provides the appearance of anonymity and privacy in counseling, privacy is more of an issue online than in person. Creative Counseling Group, PLC will use either Simple Practice, Skype, Zoom, or other HIPPA compliant internet platforms for web conferencing and chat communications between counselors and clients. The client is responsible for securing their computer hardware, internet access points, and password security.

The counselor has a right to their privacy and may wish to restrict the use of any copies or recordings the client makes of their communications. Clients must seek the counselor's written permission before recording any portion of the session or posting any part of the session on internet websites such as Facebook or YouTube.

Potential benefits

The potential benefits of receiving mental health services via telehealth include the circumstances in which the counselor considers telehealth counseling appropriate and the possible advantages of providing those services through telehealth. For example, video chat's potential benefits include the convenience for clients to potentially receive counseling from anywhere once an internet signal and necessary hardware are secured. Text-based chat has many of the same advantages of convenience, feeling reduced scrutiny from the counselor, having time to compose a response, and referring back to the chat log for reference. The benefits of using asynchronous email messages may include (a) being able to send and Creative Counseling Group, PLC. receive a message at any time of day or night; (b) never having to leave messages or voicemails; (c) being able to take as long as one likes to compose a message and having the opportunity to reflect upon it; (d) automatically having a record of communication to refer to later; and (e) feeling less inhibited than in person.

Potential risks

There are various risks related to telehealth provisions in counseling services related to the technology used, the distance between counselor and client, and timeliness issues. For example, email-based counseling's potential risks may include messages not being received and confidentiality breaches through unencrypted email, lack of password protection, or leaving information on a public access computer in a library or internet café. Messages could fail to be received if sent to the wrong address (which might also breach confidentiality) or if they just are overlooked by the counselor. Confidentiality could be breached in transit by hackers or Internet service providers or at either end by others with access to the client's account or computer. People accessing the internet from a public location such as a library, computer lab, or café should consider the screen's visibility to people around them. Position yourself to avoid others' ability to read your screen. Using cell phones can also be risky because signals are scrambled but rarely encrypted.

Safeguards

Your counselor has selected an account with an appropriate platform for chat and video communications to allow your sessions' content's highest possible security and confidentiality. Most software can be used by following a personalized link and used without downloading any new software. Your personal information is encrypted and stored on a secure server in compliance with HIPAA regulations. The client is responsible for creating and using additional safeguards when the computer used to access services is accessed by others. Creating passwords to use the computer, keeping their email and chat IDs and passwords secret, and maintaining the security of their wireless internet access points. Please discuss any additional concerns with your counselor early in your first session to develop strategies to limit risk.

Alternatives

Telehealth counseling may not be appropriate for many clients, including those who have numerous concerns over the risks of telehealth counseling, clients with active suicidal or homicidal thoughts, and clients who are experiencing active manic/psychotic symptoms. An

alternative to receiving telehealth mental health services would be receiving mental health services in person. Creative Counseling Group, PLC can and will assist clients who would like to explore face-to-face options in the area. Please feel free to request a referral when you think a different counseling relationship would be more practical or beneficial for you.

Proxies

The counselor requires this consent form to be signed by the legal guardian of any client seeking services under 18. The legal guardian's name and contact information become a part of the client's record.

Confidentiality of the client

Maintaining client confidentiality is extremely important to the counselor, and the counselor will use their standard care and consideration to prevent unnecessary disclosure. Therapists will only release information about the client with expressed and written permission. Exceptions to this rule includes (a) if the counselor believes that someone is seriously considering and likely to attempt suicide; (b) If the counselor believes that someone intends to assault another person; (c) if the counselor believes someone is engaging or intends to engage in behavior which will expose another person to a potentially life-threatening communicable disease; (d) if a counselor suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a minor or of an incapacitated adult; (e) if a counselor believes that someone's mental condition leaves the person gravely disabled.

Records

The counselor will maintain records of online counseling and consultation services. These records can include reference notes, internet communication, and session summaries. According to the American Counseling Association, National Board of Certified Counselors, and the Iowa Board of Clinical Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Mental Health, these records are confidential. They will be maintained as required by applicable legal and ethical standards by Counselors and the state of Iowa. The client will be asked in advance for permission before any audio or video recording would occur on the counselor's end.

Procedures

The counselor might not immediately receive an online communication or experience a local backup affecting internet connectivity. If the client is in a state of crisis or emergency, the counselor recommends contacting a crisis line or an agency local to the client. Clients may utilize the following crisis hotlines: 1-800-332-4224 (For the deaf or hard-of-hearing: 1-800-799-4TTY).

Payments

Creative Counseling Group, Plc., will process payments through our payment portal. We will file your insurance claim, but you are responsible for contacting your insurance company to pre-authorize telehealth counseling before your first session. You are responsible for letting your therapist know before your session if there are any changes in your insurance policy or coverage. Further, you are responsible for deductibles, co-insurance, and co-payments, and you should familiarize yourself with your insurance. All payment or co-payment is due at the session time unless other arrangements have been made.

Disconnection of Services

If there is ever a disruption of telehealth services or the internet connection, the therapist will attempt to reconnect. If services cannot be re-established within ten minutes, the client will need to call reception to discuss how to proceed with the session or reschedule. Clients can reach reception at 319-200-1022 or the number provided by me at the beginning of the session.

Patient Consent to the Use of Telehealth

I have read and understood the information provided above regarding telehealth counseling services. I have discussed it with my counselor. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read this document carefully and understand the risks and benefits related to the use of telehealth counseling services and have had my questions regarding the procedure explained.

Print Client's Name

Date of Birth

Signature of Identified Client/Parent/Legal Guardian

Relationship

Witness

Date