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Informed Consent for Telehealth

This Informed Consent for Telehealth document contains important information focusing on providing healthcare services using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully, and let us know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your therapist.

Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

Telehealth refers to providing healthcare 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 if you are sick but feel well enough to participate in therapy, are unable to secure transportation to your appointment, or if you are in state but out of town. Your therapist will still be able to provide translation services through phone or video conferencing. Telehealth is also more convenient and takes less time. It does however, require technical competence on both you and your therapist's parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telehealth, there are some differences between in-person treatment and telehealth, as well as some risks.

Risks to Confidentiality:

As telehealth sessions take place outside of Avers and Biddle Counseling Associates LLC offices, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On our end, your therapist will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. It is important; however, 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 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.

Crisis Management and Intervention:

Usually, your therapist will not engage in telehealth with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. We may not have an option of in-person services presently, but in a crisis situation, you may require a higher level of services. Before engaging in telehealth, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telehealth work.

Confidentiality

Your therapist has a legal and ethical responsibility to make their best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of telehealth services. The nature of electronic communications technologies, however, is such that your therapist cannot guarantee that they will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to your communications. Your therapist will do their best to utilize 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).

Your therapist may provide translation services through third party representatives upon request which can be utilized for phone and video conferencing sessions. An authorization form for release of information must be signed prior to initiating translation services.

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that is outlined in the Outpatient Services Agreement still applies in telehealth. Please let us know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telehealth

Telehealth is only used when clinically appropriate to do so and when we are complying to licensing standards. In certain circumstances your therapist may decide that telehealth is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. In this case, your therapist will communicate this and provide options for you to receive services moving forward. If you decide telehealth is not optimal for you, it is important to let us know as well. We will discuss options of engaging in referrals to another professional in your area who can provide more appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

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

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as technological connection failure, and you are having an emergency, do not call us back; instead, call 9-1-1, crisis intervention at 717-394-2631, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call us 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 your therapist will wait two (2) minutes and then re-connect you via the telehealth platform on which we agreed to conduct treatment. If your therapist does not connect via the telehealth platform within two (2) minutes, then call them on the phone number your therapist provided you with.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telehealth as apply for in-person therapy. It is important that you contact your insurer to determine if there are applicable co-pays or fees which you are responsible for. 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 therapy 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.

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.

Records

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

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that you agreed to at the outset of your treatment and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Telehealth Session Requirements

Prior to starting telehealth services, we discussed and agreed to the following:

- There are potential benefits and risks of video-conferencing (e.g. limits to patient confidentiality) that differ from in-person sessions.
- Confidentiality still applies for telehealth services, and nobody will record the session without the permission from the other person(s).
- We agree to use the video-conferencing platform selected for our virtual sessions, and the therapist will explain how to use it.
- You need to use a webcam or smartphone during the session.
- It is important to be in a quiet, private space that is free of distractions (including cell phone or other devices) during the session.
- It is important to use a secure Internet connection rather than public/free Wi-Fi.
- It is important to be on time. If you need to cancel or change your tele-appointment, you must notify the therapist in advance by phone or email.
- We need a back-up plan (e.g. phone number where you can be reached) to restart the session or to reschedule it, in the event of technical problems.
- We need a safety plan that includes at least one emergency contact and the closest ER to your location, in the event of a crisis situation.
- If you are not an adult, we need the permission of your parent or legal guardian (and their contact information) for you to participate in telepsychology sessions.
- You should confirm with your insurance company that the video sessions will be reimbursed; if they are not reimbursed, you are responsible for full payment.
- Your therapist may determine that due to certain circumstances, telehealth is no longer appropriate and that you should resume in-person sessions.

Your signature below indicates understanding and or agreement with the above terms and conditions.

Client Name - Relationship to Client

Client Signature

Date

Witness Name

Witness Signature

Date