

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH

Psychiatric & Psychological Associates of Durham, PLLC

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

Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

Telehealth refers to providing healthcare services, including psychotherapy and medication management, remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing over a computer or phone or speaking by telephone. The primary benefit of telehealth is that the client and clinician do not need to be in the same place, so neither needs to commute and therapy can more easily continue if, for example, the client moves. Telehealth does present risks, however. For example:

- Confidentiality risks due to location. Much more than therapy in a private office, telehealth carries a risk that someone walking by will overhear your conversation. Your clinician will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy, but it will be up to you to find a private place for your sessions.
- Issues related to technology. You will need to have technology that can use the telehealth platform; we cannot contribute to the cost of your devices or internet service. Even if the technology usually works, it may stop working during a session. It is also theoretically possible that someone else could access a private conversation or that stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies. Our practice will not record sessions, and the video conferencing service we use encrypts data to maintain privacy and comply with HIPAA requirements.
- Crisis management and intervention. Telehealth is not well suited to crisis management. An alternate crisis management plan is called for. Because this is an outpatient practice, our expectation is that if you believe yourself to be at risk of seriously harming yourself or someone else, you will call 911 or go to a hospital emergency department.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telehealth is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, your clinician may find it more difficult to understand your nonverbal communication or to assess your general physical health status.

Electronic Communications

For communication between sessions, your clinician will only use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes, unless you have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with our office should be limited to administrative matters, such as setting up and changing appointments and billing. Because we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text, our clinicians will not discuss clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do

not either. Also, they do not always frequently check their email or texts, so these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

If an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach your clinician by phone. If you are unable to reach your clinician and feel that you cannot wait for the clinician to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency department and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If your clinician will be unavailable for an extended time, he or she will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact if necessary.

Social Media

Your clinician will not communicate with you through social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Although your clinician may participate in social media, that would be separate from his or her professional role. Please do not attempt to contact your clinician over social media, and please understand if you do not receive a response.

Clients may review, rate, or post comments on medical practices. Mental health professionals are often unable to respond to such postings because to do so would be a breach of confidentiality. If you encounter postings by or regarding your clinician online that concern you, you are welcome to discuss them in therapy.

Confidentiality

We have a legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telehealth. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential. We will try to use 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, by, for example, only using secure networks for telehealth sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telehealth.

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that outlined in the PPAD Consent Agreement still apply in telehealth. Please let your clinician know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telehealth

Your clinician will let you know if he or she decides that telehealth is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. You can then discuss the options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Best Practices for Telehealth

Telehealth will most closely resemble an in person meeting if the following conditions are met:

- Reliable, strong internet connection
- Device with adequate battery power
- Privacy from interruption

- Good sound quality
- Participants' faces fully visible and well lit

We understand that participants may sometimes be interrupted despite their best intentions.

Session Interruptions

If the session is interrupted, disconnect and attempt re-connection. If your clinician cannot reconnect, your clinician may call you, and you may call your clinician. If there is a technological failure during your usual session time and we are unable to resume the connection, your insurance will not be charged for a standard session.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telehealth as apply for in-person psychotherapy. However, 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 psychotherapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company before beginning telehealth sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

Records

The telehealth sessions will not be recorded. You may not record or screenshot sessions. Your clinician will maintain a record of your session in the same way records would be maintained for in-person sessions.

Your records, including protected health information, may be stored electronically with therapynotes.com, and Therapy Notes may communicate with your insurance company regarding billing. The Therapy Notes company, with which we contract, protects health information using encryption and firewalls in compliance with federal HIPAA regulations.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to our practice's general informed consent and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with the terms and conditions of this agreement.

Client

Date

Clinician

Date