



College of Education

Belin-Blank Center
600 Blank Honors Center
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-0454
319-335-6148
belinblank.org

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information focusing on conducting psychotherapy or other psychological services over 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 the Assessment and Counseling Clinic (ACC) staff and yourself.

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to providing psychological services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care when traveling to the ACC poses an undue burden (such as distance) or if the client/parent is otherwise unable to meet in person (e.g., due to health reasons). Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. ACC staff will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. It is important for you to make sure you find a private place for your/your child's sessions where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your/your child's session when using a cell phone or other device. You/your child 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 telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to the private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, we will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

You and your/your child's counselor will decide together which kind of telepsychology service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your/your child's regularly scheduled sessions. If an urgent issue arises, you may attempt to reach your/your child's counselor by phone or email. ACC staff will try to respond within 24 hours except on weekends, holidays, or if your/your child's counselor is away from the office due to vacation, travel, or illness. If you are unable to reach your/your child's counselor and need immediate assistance, contact your/your child's family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call.

Confidentiality

Your/your child's counselor has a legal and ethical responsibility to make their best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. We will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your/your child's 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 communications via telepsychology (for example, only using secure networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in the Service Agreement still apply in telepsychology. Please let us know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telepsychology

From time to time, you and your/your child's counselor may schedule in-person sessions to "check-in" with one another. Your/your child's counselor will let you know if it is decided that telepsychology is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you or your child. You and your/your child's counselor will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or, if known, referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services. Except in rare circumstances, initial therapy appointments will occur in person.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, you will create an emergency plan with your/your child's counselor before engaging in telepsychology services. You will be asked to identify an emergency contact person who is near your/your child's location and who your/your child's counselor will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. If necessary, you will be asked to sign a separate authorization

form allowing your/your child's counselor to contact the listed emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you/your child are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call your/your child's counselor back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you/your child are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and your/your child's counselor will attempt to re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which you agreed to conduct therapy. If you are not able to reconnect within 2 minutes, then you are encouraged to call the ACC at 319-467-0965.

If there is a technological failure and you are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telepsychology 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 provider does not cover electronic psychotherapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

Records

The telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. Your/your child's counselor will maintain a record of telepsychology sessions in the same way they 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 was agreed to at initiation of clinical services and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Signature of Adult Client or Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Adult Client or Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Minor Client (age 12 or older)

Date

Signature of Psychologist

Date