

Informed Consent for Teletherapy

Client Name: _____

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

Benefits and Risks of Teletherapy

Teletherapy refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of teletherapy 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 if the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Teletherapy, however, requires technical competence by both client and clinician to be helpful. Although there are benefits of teletherapy, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and teletherapy, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because teletherapy 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. Your counselor will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. It is important 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 the 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 teletherapy. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to the private conversations, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, your counselor will not engage in teletherapy with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in teletherapy, an emergency response plan will be developed to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of teletherapy work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that teletherapy 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

The client and clinician will decide together which kind of teletherapy service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use teletherapy services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in teletherapy. For communication between sessions, your counselor will use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless another agreement has been made. This means that email exchanges and text messages should be limited to administrative matters, and should be directed to the administrative team. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that your counselor cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, your counselor will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Do not use email or text messages in an emergency situation.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. But if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach your counselor by phone. He or she will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach your counselor and feel that you cannot wait for he or she to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. If your counselor will be unavailable for an extended time, he or she may provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in his/her absence if necessary.

Confidentiality

Each counselor at FCC has a legal and ethical responsibility to make his or her best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our teletherapy. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that your counselor cannot guarantee that your communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to your communications. The clinician 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 any communications (for example, only using secure networks for teletherapy sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for teletherapy).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that your counselor outlined in my Informed Consent still apply in teletherapy. Please let your counselor know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Teletherapy

Your counselor will let you know if teletherapy is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you and discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting teletherapy than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, you and your counselor may create an emergency plan before engaging in teletherapy services, where you may identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who your counselor will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call your counselor back; instead, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call your counselor 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 counselor will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the agreed upon teletherapy platform. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call your counselor on the phone number he or she provided you.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for teletherapy 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 prior to engaging in teletherapy sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

Records

The teletherapy sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. Your counselor will maintain a record of your session in the same way he or she maintains records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____