

William L. Mulligan, PhD, PC
T/A Cognitive Behavior Therapy Center

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information regarding the provision of psychotherapy using 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, your therapist and the Cognitive Behavior Therapy Center.

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to the provision of psychotherapy services remotely, using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing. 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 if the client is ill, moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable meet in person. It may also be more convenient and require less of the patient's time. However, Telepsychology has certain technical requirements, there are some risks and there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology that you should be aware of. 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. Your therapist will take reasonable steps on his/her end 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. 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 telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to your private conversations with your therapist, and stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, therapists do not engage in telepsychology with clients who are in a crisis 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 while conducting telepsychology conference.
- 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.

Communications with your therapist and our office staff

CBTC receptionists are available in our Chesapeake office Monday-Friday, 8-5, to receive phone calls and emails from new and existing patients, and to schedule or change appointments. **Telepsychology patients are expected to call our main number at (757) 410-0700 prior to their session, to check in and process any payment that may be due, with a credit card.** We accept MasterCard and Visa.

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While our staff responds to emails and voicemail messages as quickly as possible, in the order that they are received, they may not be able to respond immediately. **In the event of an emergency, please call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.**

Choosing a Telepsychology Platform

You and your therapist will decide together which kind of telepsychology service to use. **We will be using the doxy.me platform. It is HIPAA compliant and free to our clients.** There is no need to establish an account. Your therapist will email each patient an “invite” prior to each session. Alternatively, your therapist will call you to give you his/her doxy.me “room name”. Patients can then go to doxy.me and click on the “get started” tab. Then they will be asked to sign in as a patient, and then insert their doctor’s room name (see above) and click on the “check in” tab. The therapist will then start the session.

We do not recommend other platforms (e.g., VSee, FaceTime and Skype), even though they are frequently used by the general public, because they are not HIPAA compliant and we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of therapist-patient conversations on these platforms.

Confidentiality

We have a legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all patient health information, including communications that are a part of our telepsychology services. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that **we cannot guarantee that your communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to your communications.** Therefore, your therapist will not relay any clinical information by email or text, and we ask that you do the same. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of your communications (for example, only use secure networks for telepsychology sessions and ensure that any device you use for telepsychology is password protected). The extent of confidentiality, and the exceptions to confidentiality, that we outlined in your New Patient Documents, still apply to telepsychology. Please let your therapist know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

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, your therapist may feel it is necessary to create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. If so, your therapist will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who your therapist can communicate with in the event of an emergency. Your therapist will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing him/her to communicate with your emergency contact, as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If one of your telepsychology sessions is interrupted and you are having an emergency, do not call your therapist back; instead, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call your therapist back after you have obtained emergency services.

If one of your telepsychology sessions is interrupted for some reason other than an emergency, disconnect from the session and your therapist will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which you agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call your therapist on the phone number provided to you.

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Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telepsychology as apply for in-person psychotherapy. While Virginia Law mandates the same coverage for telehealth services as for in-person services, and most major insurance plans comply with Virginia regulations, your insurance 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 for each session provided. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology sessions in order to verify that 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 therapist will maintain a record of your session in the same way he/she maintains records of in-person sessions in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Cognitive Behavior Therapy Center.

Informed Consent

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

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date