Informed Consent for TeleHealth

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information pertaining to doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. Clients are to read this carefully and let their therapist know if any questions. Signing this document will represent an agreement between the client and In-Home Counseling Services (IHC) and the appointed therapist(s).

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and therapist can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or therapist 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. Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence on both the client & therapist’s part 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. Just as when a client meets with a therapist in their home, there is potential for other people to overhear telepsychology sessions if the session is not in a private place. Therapist’s will take reasonable steps to ensure privacy. But it is important for clients to both find a private place for the session where it will not be interrupted, and protect the privacy of the session on their cell phone or other device. Telepsychology sessions should only be 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 client and therapist’s private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.

- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, therapists 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, the therapist and client will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of telepsychology.

- 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

The client and therapist will mutually agree upon which kind of telepsychology service to use. Certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services may be required. Clients are solely responsible for any cost incurred to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software needed to take part in telepsychology. In-Home Counseling (IHC) is not liable for any damage to equipment while partaking in telepsychology.

Confidentiality

Therapists have a legal and ethical responsibility to put forth best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that there is no guarantee communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to communications. Therapists will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and backup systems to help keep client information private, but there is a risk that electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. Additionally, clients are to take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device used for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that clients previously agreed to, outlined in IHC’s Client Informed Consent still apply in telepsychology. Clients are to ask their therapist any questions they may have 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, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. Therapists will ask clients to identify an emergency contact person, ideally near their location, and/or who they can contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. Clients are to provide that person’s name and contact information at the bottom of this forms, which will allow therapists to contact that person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, AND clients are having an emergency, clients are not to attempt to call their therapist back. Instead, clients are to call 911, and/or or any other hotlines or local resources previously identified in their emergency plan, or go to the nearest emergency room. Therapists are only to be called back after client has called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and clients are NOT having an emergency, disconnect from the session. Therapists will wait approximately two (2) minutes and then re-contact client via the telepsychology platform being used.

Records

The telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. Therapists will maintain a record of telepsychology sessions the same way in-person session records are maintained, in accordance with IHC policies.
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Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent clients agreed upon at the onset of services with therapist and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Client signature below indicates agreement to telepsychology services with In-Home Counseling Services and its’ providers, with its terms and conditions.

____________________________________________   __________________
Client Signature                                    Date

____________________________________________
Client Printed Name

Emergency Contact Info:

____________________________________________   _________________________________________
Name of Emergency Contact             Relationship

Phone Number of Emergency Contact: _____________________________________________________

Address of Emergency Contact: ___________________________________________________________

Emergency contact has been notified that In-Home Counseling or IHC Therapist may be contacting them in case of an emergency? ☐ YES ☐ No