

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELETHERAPY  
through the Community Counseling Services Center**

This document will provide you with information regarding teletherapy through the Community Counseling Services Center (CCSC). **It supplements the form you signed at your first session, *Informed Consent Information*.** Please read this document carefully and write down any questions you may have. We are happy to answer your questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Teletherapy means conducting counseling using a secure on-line video-conferencing platform. Teletherapy is a relatively new and evolving field. It has many potential benefits, due to its unique ability to provide access to counseling to CCSC clients when coming to the CCSC's offices is not a possibility. Teletherapy can provide continuity in your work with your counseling intern while restrictions on meetings are in place at the University. We avoid the risk of exposure to covid-19 and continue to assist you in pursuing your therapy goals.

However, due to teletherapy's emerging status there are also several areas that can cause concern for clients and counseling interns, including how to manage online-security, confidentiality, legal and licensing concerns, client safety, and effective service provision.

**Client Safety:** Primarily, in teletherapy the counseling intern has less control over the environment than in the CCSC's traditional in-office setting. For example, if the client is experiencing extreme distress, has complex psychological and social problems, or if the client is suicidal, it is more difficult for the counseling intern to gain access to supportive others close to the client to provide immediate assistance (family members, medical professionals, emergency services). Therefore, it is very important that the client and counseling intern talk together at the onset of teletherapy, and throughout the process, to determine if teletherapy is an appropriate way to receive services. In addition, clients will need to provide an emergency contact and information on their local resources and give the counseling intern permission to access them if the counseling intern believes that calling for emergency services is needed.

**Ethics.** Our professional ethics codes (American Counseling Association; National Board of Certified Counselors) have addressed ethical guidelines around providing therapy services online. The CCSC's mission is twofold: to offer you safe, confidential, ethical, effective, and high-quality therapy services; and to prepare counseling students to become professional counselors. Counseling interns have received basic teletherapy knowledge and will be supported by their instructors, supervisors and CCSC staff in using teletherapy to help clients meet their counseling goals.

**Fees.** Fees will be collected through the GSEHD Marketplace, a secure online billing platform. Payment of fees takes place at the end of each session. Mastercard, Visa, Discover and American Express credit or debit cards are accepted. Counseling interns will not ask for or see your credit card information. You will receive a receipt via email that does not refer to counseling or the CCSC.

Clients who now find fees difficult to pay should ask their counseling interns about reducing their fee.

**Video Conferencing using Zoom.** The Department of Counseling and Human Development purchased licenses for Zoom to provide a video conferencing platform that meets HIPAA standards of encryption and privacy protection. Clients will start Zoom teletherapy sessions by clicking on a link in an e-mail. Clients who do not have Zoom on their devices will be prompted to download a free version of Zoom. You can find information on using Zoom on the CCSC's Website or by sending an email to [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).

**Recording.** Teletherapy sessions will not be recorded.

**Supervision and Teletherapy.** Our accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, requires that if counseling sessions are not videotaped, supervisors must provide live supervision. Clients may see a black square with the supervisor's name on the screen, and supervisors will mute their microphones. Supervisors typically will not interact with the counseling intern or the client during a counseling session. Supervisors may or may not monitor an entire session. Clients may request that the supervisor is present only via a cellphone.

Like counseling interns, supervisors face sanctions should they break confidentiality unless a client reports abuse or neglect; or is a danger to self or others; or the client signs a Release of Information.

**Consultation:** Counseling interns receive weekly supervision through the same secure video conferencing platform used for teletherapy. In addition, counseling interns will be able to briefly consult with their supervisors or a CCSC staff member during the session. If needed, they will leave their teletherapy setting briefly to consult. Clients should maintain the video conference link during consultations.

**Conducting Sessions "as-if" in an office setting.** Engaging in the therapy process online is not a traditional office setting. However, general etiquette and protocol should be followed. Please attend the session on time and dress in attire you consider appropriate.

- Recording of sessions is NOT permitted.
- A webcam or a smartphone needs to be used during the session.
- It is important to be in a quiet, private space that is free of distractions (including cell phone or other devices) during the session.
- Be sure to have ample light around your computer so your counseling intern can see you clearly.
- It is imperative that no family member or friend is in hearing or has visual proximity to you or to your electronic device during the session.
- It is important to have a secure internet connection rather than public/free Wi-Fi. Check your internet provider and the regulations in your jurisdiction to ultimately determine if you are comfortable using the internet as a method to receive counseling services.
- In order to be punctual please set up for the appointment at least 5 minutes before it is due to begin. You will be admitted to a virtual waiting room.
- A back up plan in the event of technical problems may include restarting the session, resuming the session via cell phone.
- Our safety plan includes at least one emergency contact and the closest Emergency Department to your location, in the event of a crisis.
- Your counseling intern, in consultation with a supervisor, may determine that due to certain circumstances, teletherapy is no longer appropriate for you, and that you should resume sessions in-person with a counselor better equipped to meet your needs.

- We will need to determine an alternate way to contact each other in case the internet goes down for us immediately prior to or during a session. We can determine together what is the most comfortable solution for you. Some suggestions are a one-time telephone session or brief email contact to re-schedule. This is not meant to be an ongoing solution, but a way to complete our session or touch-base.

**Your location.** You will need to supply the street address of the location where you will be when you participate in teletherapy.

**Alternatives to Teletherapy.** The CCSC can provide alternatives to teletherapy. Not every service works well for every person, so it is important that you are aware of your options.

- You may want to use the traditional, in-office setting for therapy. Your counseling intern can help you find a therapist in the community, however options other than teletherapy may be unavailable.
- You could start or rely more upon resources outside the CCSC--psychiatry services for medication management for mental health symptoms. In addition, on-line support groups can help.
- You can end counseling at this point. Please discuss this option with your counseling intern before you end contact with the CCSC.

**Cancellations.** Please notify the CCSC or your counseling intern 24 hours in advance of a cancellation. You can reach the CCSC at (202) 994-8645 or [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).

**Communication with your Counseling Intern.** Counseling interns will need to email clients to send Zoom invitations for teletherapy. Counseling interns will provide clients with a work cell phone number. The CCSC staff can also pass along messages left at (202) 994-8645 or [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).

*Thanks to Myrna Frank, Ph.D, CGP and Dr. Kelli Sanness, PhD, LPC, for providing the CCSC with the foundations for this document.*

Location where you will be during teletherapy sessions:

Full Name		
Street Address		
City	State	ZIP Code
Email Address		

Emergency Contact:

Name	Phone Number	Alternate Phone Number
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Nearest Emergency Department

Name of the Hospital	Phone Number	
Street Address		
City	State	ZIP Code

By signing this document, you indicate that you have read the document, *Supplemental Informed Consent for Teletherapy* and agree to its terms. You are stating that you are aware that your counseling intern may contact the necessary authorities in case of an emergency and may contact your emergency contact. You are also acknowledging that if you believe there is imminent harm to yourself or another person, you will seek care immediately through your own local health care provider or at the nearest hospital emergency department or by calling 911.

Client's Signature (You may sign this form. Typing in your name constitutes an electronic signature)	Date
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**This form must be received before your first teletherapy appointment.** Please send this form to the CCSC. Options include:

- Complete the form; save it; and send it attached to an email to [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).
- Take a picture or screen shot of the last page of this form and send it to [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).
- Print out the form and complete it; scan it and attach it to an email to [CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu](mailto:CCSCFoggyBottom@gwu.edu).