

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELE-COUNSELING

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

Benefits and Risks of Telecounseling

Telecounseling refers to providing counseling services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits 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, like in a stay-at-home situation due to a pandemic. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telecounseling, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits, there are some differences between in-person therapy and telecounseling, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telecounseling sessions take place outside of the counselor's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our 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 telecounseling. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.

- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in telecounseling with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging

in telecounseling, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telecounseling work.

- **Efficacy.** Most research shows that telecounseling is about as effective as in-person counseling. However, some counselors believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a counselor's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

We will decide together which kind of telecounseling service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telecounseling services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telecounseling.

For communication between sessions, I only use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my email or texts, nor do I respond immediately, so these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

Confidentiality

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telecounseling. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I 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 our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telecounseling sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telecounseling).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in the Confidentiality Statement still apply in telecounseling. Please let me 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 telecounseling than in traditional in-person therapy. The Counseling Lab is a training facility and options of intervention in cases of emergency may be limited. Your counselor-in-training, consulting with their supervisor can decide to call 911 in case of threat of harm to self and others.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me 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 I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telecounseling platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call me on the phone number I provided you.

Records

The Counseling Lab at GSU is a training facility. As previously agreed, the sessions will be recorded for training purposes. The content of recordings will be shared with the supervisor, who is a licensed clinician. The recordings will be destroyed immediately after the review.

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

Counselor signature/Date