

**Jesse G. Harris, Jr. Psychological Services Center  
University of Kentucky  
INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY SERVICES**

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology Services contains important information on doing psychotherapy using videoconferencing through the Internet. *This document reflects the current issues related to the national COVID-19 crisis, but modifications may be necessary in response to rapidly changing conditions.* Please read this carefully. We will also discuss this information together. Please let us know if you have any questions. After discussion, we will ask for your verbal consent by phone or videoconference and will also make arrangements to obtain a signed copy from you when conditions allow. When you verbally consent to this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

**Benefits and Limitations 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 clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continued care if the client or clinician moves to a different location 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 our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some limitations. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the clinic, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. We will take all 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, computer 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 telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working or be disrupted 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, we 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, we will develop a safety/emergency plan to identify responses and resources to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Effectiveness. 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**

We will be using the University of Kentucky's secure Zoom software platform for videoconference psychotherapy sessions, which meets HIPAA requirements for privacy and security of personal health information. You can access this platform via a smartphone or computer. You are responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment or technology to take part in telepsychology.

For communication between sessions, we will only use phone or email communication with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. We will send secure encrypted emails to you from our [HarrisCenter@uky.edu](mailto:HarrisCenter@uky.edu) email account. However, since the security and confidentiality of email can still not be fully guaranteed, email exchanges should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, receiving Zoom invitations for telepsychology sessions, billing matters, transmission of some necessary forms and documents, and other related issues. *We will not discuss any clinical information by email and insist that you do not either. Also, we cannot respond immediately to email, so email **should not** be used if there is an emergency.*

Access to all forms of electronic communications with you will be limited to your therapist, other Harris Center therapists designated to provide assistance or coverage for clinical issues, Harris Center staff, designated Harris Center undergraduate interns, and licensed psychologist supervisors who are affiliated with the UK Clinical Psychology program.

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 us by phone. We will provide you with the appropriate phone number to use, including our after-hours phone number **(859-229-8970)** which is maintained 24 hours a day anytime our physical facility is closed. We will try to return your call within 24 hours. *If you are unable to reach us and feel that you cannot wait for us to return your call, contact your family health care provider or the nearest emergency room.* If your therapist will be unavailable for an extended time, we will provide you with the name of another therapist to contact in their absence if necessary.

### **Confidentiality**

We have a legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. We will try to use current methods and 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 (non-public) networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telepsychology).*

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that were outlined in the Informed Consent you signed at the beginning of therapy still apply in telepsychology. Please let us know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

### **Appropriateness of Telepsychology**

We will let you know if we decide that telepsychology is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

*We are not permitted to conduct telepsychology sessions with you unless you are physically within the state of Kentucky. At the beginning of each telepsychology session, we will verify with you that you are still in Kentucky. We will only be able to have brief phone contacts with you if you are outside Kentucky.*

### **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 a safety/emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location that you give permission for us to contact in the event of a crisis or emergency involving immediate harm to yourself or others 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 us back; instead, call 911, or call your nearest emergency room. Call us 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 attempt to reconnect using the Zoom telepsychology platform. If we are not able to reconnect within two (2) minutes, then we will call you on your mobile phone number.

### **Fees**

The same fees will apply for telepsychology as for in-person psychotherapy. We can make individual arrangements to address difficulties with payment, which may include delaying or waiving payment for a period of time. We can also address requests for fee reductions based on financial hardships at any time.

### **Records**

The telepsychology sessions shall be recorded and saved to a secure storage file at the University of Kentucky, only accessible to your therapist, select Harris Center staff and licensed psychologist supervisors. This is to allow for therapists' supervisors to access and review the telepsychology sessions as part of the therapists' required clinical supervision. Recorded sessions will be completely deleted within 30 days following the session. We will continue to maintain a written record of our sessions in the same way we maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with our existing 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 verbal consent to your therapist via phone or videoconference indicates agreement with its terms and conditions, and your therapist will document this verbal consent in your health record. When conditions allow, please sign below. We will provide instructions for how to return the signed copy to us.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, address, phone and relationship of emergency contact person. I agree that the Harris Center may contact this person in an emergency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client (sign name) or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**MENTAL HEALTH, MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY/CRISIS RESOURCES:**

<b>CALL 911 for Life-Threatening Emergency</b>
<b>My physician or primary care provider (name and phone number):</b>
<b>My local Hospital (name and phone number):</b>
<b>New Vista mental health center 24-hour helpline (Lexington and adjacent counties): 1-800-928-8000</b>
<b>Other local mental health crisis lines:</b>
<b>Local psychiatric hospitals (name and phone number):</b>
<b>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255</b>
<b>Other helpful numbers:</b>