



TELEHEALTH (REMOTE COUNSELING) INFORMED CONSENT

Telehealth is a rapidly expanding way for healthcare professionals to communicate with and deliver services to their clients. As an emerging form of providing services, there are benefits and risks to clients receiving remote counseling. This informed consent is intended to help you make well-informed choices about your options for care.

Benefits of telehealth (remote counseling):

- Access to counseling services for those in rural/underserved areas or for those who need specialty services not available in their location.
- Individuals who have difficulty with mobility, transportation, and/or financial hardship may access care they would not have been able to get otherwise.
- Access to counseling services for those seeking services consistent with their religious beliefs, values, and/or cultural background.
- It recognizes the right of clients to choose their own course for seeking treatment and selecting treatment providers.

Risks of telehealth (remote counseling):

- While research shows that remote counseling is largely equivalent to in-person counseling, some client issues are better addressed in an in-person counseling situation.
- Due to technology problems you and your counselor may not be able to connect to each other when needed.
- Use of technology comes with inherent risks to data security and your confidentiality.

If you participate in telehealth (remote counseling), you can expect:

- Your counselor will answer any questions you have about this informed consent and/or telehealth using terms that you can understand.
- You can end or withdraw from remote counseling at any time.
- You can receive a referral to an in-person counselor at any time.
- If you are not reaching your counseling goals or your situation is getting worse, the feasibility of remote counseling will be reassessed and a referral to in-person services may be given.

In order to participate in telehealth (remote counseling):

- You must be open and honest with your counselor about how you are doing. Withholding information from the therapist may be grounds for ending the remote counseling relationship.
- You must identify and be willing to seek assistance from support individuals or agencies in your local area if an emergency should arise. In addition, if an emergency arises you must give permission for your counselor to contact a support person(s) or agency to ensure your safety and/or well-being.
- You must be in a quiet location free from external distractions during remote counseling sessions. Please make arrangements to be uninterrupted during the scheduled session time.
- All people in the rooms where both the client and counselor are located must be introduced to all participants at the beginning of the session.
- If you have a scheduled telehealth (remote counseling) appointment and your counselor has not contacted you within 15 minutes of the scheduled starting time, please call the ACCFS office at 309-263-5536.

Data security and confidentiality:

- ACCFS takes the security and confidentiality of your personal health information (PHI) very seriously. At ACCFS, all PHI is stored and backed up on encrypted drives and servers.
- We use SimplePractice Telehealth for videoconferencing as it provides end-to-end encryption security and is HIPPA compliant. The security and confidentiality of your information cannot be assured if videoconferencing platforms such as Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, etc. are used.
- Please note that sending private information electronically by using a public Internet access point (e.g., coffee shop, hotel, etc.) or when using a computer on a shared network (e.g., library, computer lab, etc.) may expose your private information to third parties.
- The confidentiality of email and text messages is not secure unless it is sent through encrypted means. Please use the SimplePractice secure messaging feature to send messages to your counselor as it is HIPPA-secure. We cannot guarantee the security or confidentiality of information on your computer or mobile devices. We encourage you to use secure passwords and encryption on devices that you use.

If your session is disrupted due to technology issues:

- First, please try contacting your counselor through the ACCFS office number: 309-263-5536. Your counselor will try to contact you as well. Sometimes a more reliable connection can be obtained by trying again.
- If your session is not able to occur or is interrupted due to disruption in phone or Internet communications, please contact ACCFS at a later time to reschedule your appointment.
- You are welcome to contact your therapist in-between sessions via SimplePractice secure messaging. However, in most cases, responses to the content of your messages, especially those requiring more in depth responses, will occur during your next scheduled session. Your counselor will usually respond to short messages requiring brief replies within 24 hrs. If you need a response more quickly, please call the ACCFS office.

In case of an emergency:

- You are encouraged to reach out to people in your support network to review your therapy skills until you can talk with your counselor.
- If your situation is not life-threatening, but your situation is urgent and you need to talk with your counselor, please call the ACCFS office at 309-263-5536. In times of crisis, please do not try to contact your counselor through email or texting.
- If you have a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate attention, call 911 or go to your local emergency department.

By signing below, I agree to the above and give my consent to proceed with remote counseling. I understand that if I do not agree with the above, I will be referred to another mental health professional for in-person counseling.

Printed name of Client

Signature of Client or Parent/Guardian (if client is under 18)

Date