



**General Considerations for Adapting Your Practice:
Providing Relationship-Based Counseling Services to Children and Their Caregivers
via Video Telehealth**

General Preparation

- *Assess appropriateness:* With the support and guidance of your supervisor, assess if this modality of service is in the best interest of your child client and their family/caregivers (e.g. level of risk, physical and psychological/emotional safety). Take into consideration the role of equity, diversity and social justice as you consider the impact of engaging in this modality.
- *Self-awareness:* Having the space to explore and reflect, individually and with your supervisor, what it means for you (how you feel, what are your views, values and assumptions about it) to provide this modality of service. Self-awareness will help you create space to see and hold the family's perspectives and experiences.
- *Training:* Gather information about this evolving modality of service and practice the technology
 - Attend an introductory webinar to telehealth:
 - <https://apa.content.online/catalog/product.xhtml?eid=15132&eid=1921>
 - <https://childrengrieve.org/education/online-learning/10-education/212-covid-19-connections-tele-therapy-in-a-time-of-need>
 - Practice and self-observe prior to your first session.
 - Practice launching your desired telehealth application; review troubleshooting guide to prepare for unexpected issues.
 - Practice using the meeting scheduler feature; determine how you plan on sharing call details with your client.
 - Consider drafting a short text message with instructions on how to download application (if necessary) and how to join a session.
 - Record yourself conducting a mock session.
 - Review for lighting, sound, voice projection, movement, background, Internet connectivity, other potential glitches or interruptions, etc.

Engaging the Family/Planning the Session with the Family

- Schedule a time to discuss this new approach with your client's caregiver/s to ensure that the caregiver/s understand:
 - Why you are offering this modality,
 - The procedures involved in it, and
 - The equipment and environmental conditions needed for communication and confidentiality.

* Adapted from:
Zero to Thrive (March, 2020). *Telehealth service in infant mental health home visiting*. <https://zerotothrive.org/covid-19/professionals/>

Stewart, S, Wallace, M, (March, 2020). *Guide for transitioning to telehealth delivery of mental health; Addressing barriers during the COVID-19 outbreak*. Medical University of South Carolina



- The discussion should involve an exploration of the family's views, feelings about this modality and a space for them to ask questions.
- This discussion with the caregiver/s should happen before asking them to provide verbal or written consent, so services are delivered in an appropriately, ethical, and efficient manner.
- Consider asking the following questions:*

 - How do you feel about meeting in this new way?
 - How do you think your child will feel and/or react?
 - Do you have any concerns or questions?
 - Do you currently have access to a smartphone, tablet, or computer/laptop with a webcam?
 - Do you currently have access to secure Wi-Fi or a cellular hotspot?
 - Are you willing for your child or for you and your child to meet with me via your smartphone, tablet, or computer/laptop screen?
 - Are you willing for your child or for you and your child to be seen via a computer/laptop screen?
 - Do you have access to a private place where we can have our sessions (i.e., one that is protected from family members, friends, strangers, pets, TV, phone)?

Obtaining Informed Consent

- If your client's caregiver/s agree to engage in telehealth session(s) refer to CWVP's *Informed Consent to Telehealth Video Counseling Sessions* form.
- In addition to obtaining informed consent:
 - Determine if caregiver/s and/or client need technical support before the initial telehealth session.
 - Discuss issues of privacy and confidentiality, specific to telehealth video counseling.
 - Discuss risks associated with use of public Wi-Fi.
 - Inform client and caregiver/s that sessions cannot be recorded.
 - Collaborate with the caregiver/s to develop a safety plan:
 - Confirm in-service telephone number and current physical address.
 - If you are meeting with the child alone, ensure that the caregiver/s will be available in the home for safety purposes for the duration of the session. Explain to the caregiver that you will check-in with them at the beginning and end of the session with their child.
 - If you are meeting with the caregiver/s and child or the caregiver alone, determine a safe person to contact if the client and/or caregiver become dysregulated and are in need of more support.

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- Discuss when to call 911, go to the emergency room or call for additional emergency mental health support.
- Establish back-up plan in the event of an unexpected glitch (repeat at onset of each session).
- Remind client of mandated reporting, as telehealth can provide an intimate view of a client and their environment.
- Identify a code word and plan with the caregiver should their environment become unsafe and they need to end the session.

Prepare Your Environment

- Consider the impact of a client's view into your personal space:
 - Ensure your backdrop is neutral.
 - Avoid common areas where other individuals may frequent.
 - Choose an area free of pets.
 - Be mindful of potential distractions (e.g., mute or turn off your cell phone, turn off your TV).
- Ensure your computer/laptop is fully charged or connected to charging cable.
- Choose a space with strong and safe internet connectivity and minimal external distractions.
- Use a headset with microphone for clear, crisp sound and to ensure patient privacy.
- Dress appropriately for your session.
- Ensure your lighting is bright and your face is clear of shadows, so your clients can read your facial expressions.

Managing Sessions via Telehealth:

- Maintain the standard of health and quality of your service.
- Consider an opening script to avoid (or address) awkwardness and put your client at ease.
- Review and obtain informed consent specific to the provision of telehealth.
- Establish a back-up plan in the event of an unexpected glitch.

Post-Session Documentation

- Document the telehealth application used.
- Confirm that you established your client's physical location.
- Detail the length of session.
- Record any glitches experienced and how they were managed.

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