Telemental Health: Getting Started

Delivery of therapy via video to home is as effective as in-person therapy[1]. With some preparation and practice you and your client can have successful therapy sessions.

TIPS FOR CLINICIANS	
Providing therapy via telehealth is a professional service even if conducted from within your home	• If you have roommates, please ensure they cannot see or hear you and your client during your session • Consider using a sound machine to prevent others from hearing you and your client during your session
Environment	• You may need to test which area in your home/office provides optimal lighting • Test your audio as these platforms tend to have less stable audio quality. Depending on your laptop/desktop, you might need to use earbuds for clearer audio (test this out with a peer or friend prior to your first session).
Attire	• Wear solid and darker colors • Avoid prints, bright colors for optimal video quality
Preparation	• Have your materials ready either next to you or open on your computer/laptop • Have your mobile device/phone easily accessible should you need to call your client, your clinical supervisor, and/or local authorities in case of an emergency

PRE-TREATMENT SESSION	
It is highly recommended that you schedule a pre-treatment session with your client to troubleshoot any glitches with the technology as well as discuss policies and procedures for telemental health sessions.	
Review consent form	• Follow PSC clinic procedures for obtaining consent from your client
Discuss emergency policies and procedure in the case of an emergency (IMPORTANT)	• Obtain name and number of emergency contact from your client • Make sure client has your contact information (based on PSC clinic policy) • Obtain client's exact location at the beginning of EVERY session. While we encourage patient's to be in the same place each time, circumstances change so that may not always be possible. ○ Example: Client says he/she is in a parking lot inside their car. Make sure get the exact location of the parking lot *(Target parking garage on Hampton Ave, E4, make, model and color of their vehicle)*. This will ensure that local law enforcement will be able to easily find the client should an emergency arise (rationale you can provide client should they question why you need that level of detail).

Review etiquette for telemental health sessions. Here are a few things to highlight:	• This visit is like any other office visit to a healthcare provider. The client is expected to:
	   ○ Dress appropriately (e.g., remove sunglasses or hat if blocking their face).
	   ○ Show up on time and if they need to cancel or reschedule remind them of the PSC clinic policy regarding cancellations and no-shows.
	   ○ Be in a private location where others cannot see or hear them during the session.
	   ○ Refrain from engaging in other activities during session (e.g., eating (unless medically necessary), cooking, housework).
	   ○ Have childcare for young children in the home - there may be some exceptions, please check with your clinical supervisor or PSC's policy on client's bringing children to their therapy session.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR ONGOING SESSIONS	
Make use of online resources and apps to facilitate the transmission of information during session	• Have a list of helpful websites you can refer your clients (see resources) • Make use of mobile apps (see resources) o Please keep in mind that there are over 100,000 mobile mental health apps available, many of which are not evidenced-based. In addition to those that I recommend, https://psyberguide.org/apps/ provides a more comprehensive list of apps that have been reviewed by experts in the field.

COMMON ISSUES	
The client does not have a private room in their home	Some recommendations: • Garage • Shed • Vehicle • Backyard (as long as it's private enough that neighbors won't hear them) • Bathroom
You see or hear someone enter the room during session – sometimes this is a child or a family member that walks in to get something in the room	• Pause what you or the client is saying and acknowledge that there is someone else in the room You can say something like: *"It sounds/looks like there might be someone else in the room, I'm going to pause (I'm going to ask you to pause) for a minute until we regain privacy."* • If the individual remains in the room, ask the client to move to another room to ensure privacy
Technological issues	• Unstable connection, poor audio quality o Maintain video but call the client on the telephone for audio

RESOURCES	
Mobile Apps	https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/index.asp (Free) - PTSD Coach and Mindfulness Coach are the most downloaded apps. PTSD Coach has many coping tools that anyone may use (not PTSD specific). https://adaa.org/finding-help/mobile-apps - not all apps are free but ADAA has vetted these apps. https://psyberguide.org/apps/ - a comprehensive list of apps that have been reviewed by experts in the field.
Online resources	https://www.therapistaid.com/ (Free) https://veterantraining.va.gov (Free) – Online course for PTSD, Anger, Sleep, Parenting, Problem Solving. Some courses are specifically for Veterans, but all have materials that are appropriate for everyone.
Telehealth Resources	https://www.nationalregister.org/npc-telepsych-video/ - released a free 3-hour seminar that was recorded from a recent conference. Due the significant interest in providing telehealth services, the National Register of Health Service Psychologists has made this available to the public.
COVID-19 Resources	NCPTSD: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/index.asp - CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html and https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp Specifically if working with older adults: https://gerocentral.org/clinical-toolbox/covid-19-resources/

[1] Fletcher, T.L., Hogan, J.B., Keegan F., Davis, M.L., Wassef, M., Day, S. & Lindsay J.A. (2018). Recent Advances in Delivering Mental Health Treatment via Video to Home. *Current Psychiatry Reports,20*(8), 56. doi: 10.1007/s11920-018-0922-y.