

Lewis and Clark College Counseling Service

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEMENTAL HEALTH, Spring 2020 (3/31/20)

This Informed Consent for Telemental Health contains important information related to engaging in counseling via the phone or the internet. This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that all clients are given at the outset of counseling. This document does not replace any of the terms of that other consent form. Please read this document carefully, and let your counselor know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between Lewis & Clark Counseling Service staff and you to engage in Telemental Health.

Benefits and Risks of Telemental Health

Telemental Health refers to providing counseling services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of Telemental Health 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 are unable to continue to meet in person. Telemental Health, however, requires technical competence on the part of the client and the counselor in order to be helpful. Although there are benefits of Telemental Health, there are some differences between in-person counseling and Telemental Health, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because Telemental Health 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 our end we 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, free of distractions, 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. **It is important to use a secure internet connection rather than public/free Wi-Fi.**
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact Telemental Health. For example, technology may stop working during a session.
- Crisis management and intervention. Generally speaking, Counseling Service staff will not engage in Telemental Health with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in Telemental Health, your counselor will develop an emergency response plan with you to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our Telemental Health work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that Telemental Health 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.

Please be aware that some Counseling Service staff will be restricted in where they may practice Telemental Health, e.g., they may not be able to practice across state lines, due to the terms of their license. As a result, staff will ask you to verify your physical location at the start of each Telemental Health session.

Electronic Communications

The Counseling Service is currently using Zoom technology for our Telemental Health sessions. We highly recommend that clients using Zoom for Telemental Health services join by "computer audio" or via an app on a smartphone. *Zoom is not secure and confidential if you are just dialing in via phone.* If you cannot use computer audio or the Zoom smartphone app for your Telemental Health session, please let your provider know in advance, and the session will be conducted via telephone, without use of Zoom.

If you need to communicate with your counselor about setting, changing, or cancelling an appointment, you should contact your counselor via secure message in our Health Information Portal. We generally will not discuss clinical information via the Portal. All LC students have an LC Health Information Portal account. Visit <https://lclark.mediatconnect.com> to login. Directions for obtaining your username or resetting your password for the Portal are available at: <https://www.lclark.edu/live/files/28007-portal-guidelinespdf>

Also, please be aware that staff do not check secure messages on days when they are not in the office, and may only check messages once per day. Even when we read messages, we are usually unable to respond immediately, so urgent or emergency concerns should never be communicated via the Portal.

If an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to contact the Counseling Service at 503-768-7160 during office hours (Monday through Friday 8:30 am to noon and 1 to 4:30 pm). If you experience a crisis at any time when counseling staff are unavailable, please contact the Crisis Counseling Service (available 24/7) at 503-265-7804.

Confidentiality

We have a legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our Telemental Health. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people could never gain access to our communications. Our Zoom platform offers encryption to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications could be compromised or accessed by others. You can help protect the security of the platform by taking reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of communications (for example, only using secure networks for Telemental Health sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for Telemental Health).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in our basic Informed Consent document apply to Telemental Health. Please let your counselor know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telemental Health

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

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting Telemental Health than in traditional in-person counseling. To address some of these difficulties, your counselor will create with you an emergency plan before engaging in Telemental Health services. They will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and whom they might contact in the event of an emergency to assist in addressing the situation. If you are on campus, this emergency contact can be Campus Safety. Your counselor will review with you the conditions under which they would contact your emergency contact, and will ask that you sign a separate release-of-information form to authorize such emergency communication.

If a Telemental Health session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call your counselor back; instead, call 911, the Crisis Counseling Service at 503-265-7804 or go to your nearest emergency room. Call your counselor back (503-768-7160) after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If a Telemental Health session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session. Your counselor will wait about two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the Telemental Health platform on which they agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive contact back within two (2) minutes, then call your counselor at 503-768-7160 or send a secure message through the Health Information Portal (<https://lclark.medicatconnect.com>) to reschedule.

If there is a technological failure and your counselor is unable to resume the connection, they will send you a secure message through the Health Information Portal (<https://lclark.medicatconnect.com>) to reschedule. Whenever your counselor sends you a message through the Portal, you will receive an email prompt at your LC email account.

Records

Telemental Health sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent of both the counselor and the client. Counseling staff will maintain a record of Telemental Health sessions in the same way that they maintain records of in-person sessions.

Informed Consent

My signature below indicates that I have read, understand, and agree to the above terms:

Printed Name

Signature

Date