INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH DURING AND AFTER THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

This Informed Consent for Telehealth contains important information focusing on providing healthcare services using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully, and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

Telehealth refers to providing mental health psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of Telehealth is that the patient and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful particularly during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in ensuring continuity of care as the patient and clinician likely are in different locations or are otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telehealth, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of Telehealth, there are some differences between in-person treatment and Telehealth, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. As Telehealth sessions take place outside of your [insert discipline]'s office [clinic], there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end, I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. It is important; however, 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 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 Telehealth. For example, technology may stop working 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, I will not engage in Telehealth with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. We may not have an option of in-person services presently, but in a crisis situation, you may require a higher level of services. Before engaging in Telehealth, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our Telehealth work.

Electronic Communications
You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use tele-psychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in Telehealth.

For communication between sessions, I only use email communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with my office should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my email or texts, and do not respond immediately, therefore, these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

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 me by phone. I will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, and if you need immediate attention, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence, if necessary.

Confidentiality
I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of Telehealth services. The nature of electronic communications technologies, however, is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up 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 networks for Telehealth sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for Telehealth).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Informed Consent ***[use whatever title you have for your informed consent document]*** still apply in telehealth. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telehealth
During this time, it may not be possible to engage in in-person sessions to "check-in" with one another. I will let you know if I decide that Telehealth is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. If you decide Telehealth is not optimal for you, it is important to let me know.

We will discuss options of engaging in referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

[Providers must work with their Telehealth patients to develop a plan for dealing with crisis/ emergency situations and technology failures when providing Telehealth services. These plans should include things such as: how crisis/emergency situations will be addressed (local resources, hotlines, trusted people identified by the patient, etc.); how to confirm patient's location; how to deal with technology failures during sessions and in crisis situations; how to deal with billing in the event of technology failures; and similar considerations.

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting Telehealth than in traditional in-person treatment. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in Telehealth services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as technological connection failure, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 9-1-1, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me 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 I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-connect you via the Telehealth platform on which we agreed to conduct treatment. If I do not connect via the Telehealth platform within two (2) minutes, I will call your cell phone. If I am unable to connect this way then call me on the phone number 7148349222.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for Telehealth as apply for in-person therapy. Some insurers are waiving co-pays during this time. It is important that you contact your insurer to determine if there are applicable co-pays or fees which you are responsible for. Insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic therapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in Telehealth sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

Records
The Telehealth sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed Consent
This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our treatment together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

_____	_____
Patient	Date
_____	_____
Provider	Date