

## **PACIFIC UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER (SCC) TELETHERAPY INFORMED CONSENT ADDENDUM**

This document serves as an addendum to our "Information About Our Services and Consent for Service" and outlines information applicable to teletherapy services provided by SCC staff. Please also review our "Information About Our Services and Consent for Service" document for more comprehensive information about our services and your rights and responsibilities related to counseling services at SCC.

Teletherapy services include communication over phone or internet and may include sessions conducted over phone or secure videoconferencing. Our typical service delivery model includes in-person services only and in an effort to reduce disruption to our clinical services and to prioritize the health and safety of our community we are expanding our services to include teletherapy services in response to the current global health crisis (COVID-19).

While reviewing this addendum we encourage you to consider whether teletherapy is likely to meet your needs and preferences. You may withdraw your consent for teletherapy services at any time. However, during times when teletherapy is our only service option, withdrawing your consent for teletherapy will necessitate ending services with the SCC. We will provide referrals for off-campus services upon request.

### **ELIGIBILITY FOR TELETHERAPY SERVICES**

Teletherapy services are available to Pacific University students when the clinician and client have decided that teletherapy services are an appropriate form of treatment for the client's presenting concern and current circumstances. Licensing regulations require that teletherapy services be provided only when the clinician and client are located within the state of Oregon. Teletherapy services are not appropriate for all concerns or all clients. If your clinician determines that the teletherapy services that the SCC provides would not be appropriate to meet your therapeutic needs, referrals for other services will be provided. Please be aware that assessment of individual needs will be ongoing and that a referral may occur at any time during the course of therapy.

### **BENEFITS AND RISKS UNIQUE TO TELETHERAPY**

**Remote Access and Continuity of Care:** A benefit of teletherapy is that clients are able to access care and communicate with a clinician when they are not in the same physical location, for example when a student has left campus and still remains in the state of Oregon.

**Efficacy:** Teletherapy is a relatively new treatment, therefore it lacks robust research indicating whether it is an effective mode of mental health treatment. We believe that teletherapy should not be viewed as an alternative to in-person counseling and may not be appropriate for all concerns. Our clinicians will consult with you regarding whether teletherapy is an appropriate mode of treatment for your concerns and will offer referrals for other services when deemed appropriate.

**Risks to Privacy and Confidentiality:** Because teletherapy sessions take place outside of SCC offices, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private setting. SCC clinicians will take precautions to maintain your confidentiality during sessions (see below) and it is important for you to follow our Suggestions for Successful Teletherapy Sessions (see below) to reduce the risks to your privacy and confidentiality.

**Technology Issues:** SCC has invested in technology that is protected, secure, and encrypted. However, unauthorized access (e.g., hacking) is a risk to any technology.

Technology may also fail during a session, for example if a storm knocks out power or the screen freezes.

**Access to Technology:** Not everyone will be able to use teletherapy because not all students have access to the technology required to communicate for sessions.

**Emergencies and Crises:** Teletherapy services may not be appropriate or effective for managing mental health emergencies or elevated risk to self or other.

### **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Teletherapy services have the same confidentiality coverage and limits thereof as in-person services outlined in "Information About Our Services and Consent for Service." With regard to teletherapy services, additional considerations for confidentiality are included here.

As with any technology, there are risks of intrusion by hackers or other unauthorized users. SCC takes steps to limit these risks by utilizing password protected hardware and software, a secure server, and encrypted software for online forms (Titanium Scheduler) and videoconferencing (Protected Data Zoom). Additionally, when our staff are unable to be in our clinic offices, we will select a private space and take other precautions to limit anyone overhearing the session.

### **TELETHERAPY PROTOCOLS**

- No recording of any portion of your session will be conducted without your permission. The SCC will only record sessions in accordance with training policies for our advanced graduate student clinicians and with your written and verbal permission.
- For phone sessions: Your clinician will contact you at the scheduled time.
- For videoconferencing sessions: You and your clinician will use the Zoom link provided to you via email to meet at the scheduled time.
- Your clinician will confirm your location, current emergency contact, and closest mental health crisis resources.
- If the connection is lost during a phone session, your clinician will attempt to contact you again.
- If the connection is lost during a Zoom session, both you and your clinician should wait 30 seconds then attempt to reconnect.
- If a connection is lost during the session it can take up to 10 minutes to reconnect, so please wait. If your clinician is unable to establish a new connection, you will receive a telephone call at the number provided, and if that form of communication also fails you will receive an email regarding rescheduling.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL TELETHERAPY SESSIONS**

- Ensure that you have a private place where you will not be interrupted.
- Reduce distractions, for example, you may want to silence your phone or keep pets or loved ones in another room.
- Take precautions that your sessions will not be overheard by others
- Use only a secure internet connection (i.e., one that requires a password) to reduce unwanted access to your sessions.
- You must have access to a device that will be compatible with the service being offered, for example a phone for phone sessions and a device that connects to the internet for videoconferencing sessions via Zoom.

### **MANAGING CRISIS**

Assessing and evaluating crises and emergencies may be more difficult in teletherapy than in-person. To address some of these difficulties, we require that you provide us your location at the time of your sessions, contact information for an emergency contact, information for the nearest emergency room or crisis mental health agency, and collaboratively we will create a safety plan as part of our routine service. If you are in crisis during a session you or your clinician may need to engage your emergency contact or emergency services, for example call 9-1-1, to ensure your safety. Clients are also encouraged to utilize the following 24/7 crisis resources if they need additional support between teletherapy sessions:

**SCC 24/7 Support and Crisis Line** at 503-352-2999

**Crisis Text Line** Text "Connect" to 741-741

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 1-800-273-8255

**Trevor Lifeline** who serves LGBTQIA youth (under 25) at 1-866-488-7386.

Please fill-out the following information to collaborate with us to keep you safe:

**Client Name:**

**Address Where Client Will Be Located for Sessions:**

**Client Phone Number:**

**Name of Emergency Contact in your Location:**

**Phone Number for Emergency Contact in your Location:**

**Nearest Emergency Room or Crisis Mental Health Agency:**

**Agency Name:**

**Agency Phone:**

**Agency Address:**

If the above information needs to be changed throughout the course of treatment it is the client's responsibility to inform their clinician of any changes so that we can update your records.

I have read and understand the above information and all my questions have been answered. By electronically signing this document I hereby give informed consent to use teletherapy at the SCC.

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Signature of Client

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Date