

## CAPS INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELECOUNSELING

This Informed Consent for Telecounseling contains important information focusing on doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

### Benefits and Risks of Telecounseling

Telecounseling refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telecounseling 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. Telecounseling, however, requires technical awareness on both parties to be helpful. Although there are benefits of Telecounseling, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telecounseling, as well as some risks. For example:

- **Risks to confidentiality:** Telecounseling sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. CAPS clinicians will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. It is important 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 telecounseling. 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. To mitigate privacy breaches we are using Zoom Health, which offers end-to-end encryption.
- **Crisis management and intervention:** For immediate support outside of your scheduled CAPS appointment. We encourage you to call CAPS at (401)454-6637 to speak with a trained clinician immediately. You may also contact Public Safety at (401)454-6666 for support.
- **Efficacy:** Most research shows that telecounseling is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, there is a risk of misunderstanding one another when communication lacks visual or auditory cues.

### Electronic Communications

You will decide with your CAPS provider which kind of telecounseling service to use either phone or a HIPAA Compliant video platform. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telecounseling services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telecounseling.

## **Confidentiality**

CAPS has the legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telecounseling. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. CAPS uses 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 telecounseling sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telecounseling).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in the CAPS Informed Consent still apply in telecounseling. Please speak with your provider about exceptions to confidentiality.

## **Emergencies and Technology**

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telecounseling than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, your CAPS provider may create an emergency plan before engaging in telecounseling services. You will need to provide an emergency contact in case of a disruption or technological connection failure. Your CAPS therapist will try to reconnect with you, do not contact them. If you are in need of immediate and urgent assistance call Public Safety at (401)454-6666 or go to your nearest emergency room.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and your CAPS provider will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telecounseling platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call the CAPS office at (401)454-6637 and leave a message, your provider will call you back.