

Integrative Psychology Services

659 Eagle Rock Avenue, Suite 4

West Orange, NJ 07052

Phone: 888-284-2034

E-mail: info@drkeithgolin.net

www.drkeithgolin.net

Tele-therapy Consent and Policy Form

This document outlines Integrative Psychology Services' office policies related to use of Tele-therapy as either a substitute for or in addition to in office, face to face visits. It will help you to understand the variety of issues involved in telehealth, including but not limited to: Benefits, Risks and Limitations; Method of Delivery of Tele-Therapy; Assessment and Reassessment of Progress and Effectiveness; Procedures When Interruption of Services Occurs; Emergency Procedures/Verification of Location; Appropriate Environment/Conduct/Privacy/Confidentiality; Fees, Coverage and Reimbursement Information; Financial Concerns When Technology Fails; Telephone Sessions

If you have any questions about anything within this document, Integrative Psychology Services encourages you to discuss them with your licensed clinician at any time. As new ethical guidelines and laws are developed this policy may be amended and you will be notified of any policy changes both verbally and in written form.

Benefits, Risks and Limitations of Tele-Therapy

Under most circumstances, tele-therapy, AKA remote counseling/psychotherapy, should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face counseling; however, certain circumstances may arise that lead us to determine that short or longer term tele-therapy is clinically indicated and in your best interest.

Typically, remote counseling is used as an adjunctive treatment option in the event that our licensed clinician or you, the client, are unable to travel to the office. These situations include, but are not limited to illness; inclement weather; or some emergency situations such as a natural disaster.

Inherent in the use of tele-therapy are certain risks and limitations, including, but not limited to:

- Lack of visual and/or audio cues, leading to misunderstanding/misinterpretation
- Delayed responses
- Technology failures that lead to disruptions and decrease the quality of the service
- Unsuitability for clients experiencing a psychological crisis, acute psychosis, or suicidal or homicidal thoughts
- Confidentiality breaches

Research supports tele-therapy as an effective psychotherapy tool. It has shown to have similar results as traditional face-to-face, in office therapies. But, as with in-office treatment, it varies depending on the person accessing services. There are many potential benefits to engaging in remote psychotherapy services including but not limited to:

- **Flexibility and Convenience:** With tele-therapy, it's almost always in the comfort of your own home or office. It can reduce scheduling barriers and reduce the wait time for an appointment.
- **Privacy:** when special safeguards are adhered to (see below), it can be as secure as face-to-face sessions
- **Efficiency:** It eliminates the need to get in the car, on the train or ride the bus to your appointment. As long as you are in a private and secure space, your commute can be steps away.
- **Accessibility:** Remote psychotherapy allows for those who would otherwise be unable to receive mental health services. Such as individuals who experience transportation barriers due to illness, physical limitations, child-care challenges, lack transportation options, or reside in rural or remote areas. Additionally, tele-therapy may also be a useful temporary substitute when the weather creates dangerous travelling conditions.

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Assessment and Reassessment of Progress and Effectiveness

As with face-to-face, in office treatment, your remote psychotherapy treatment plan will be individualized and will be assessed/reassessed on a regular basis. We need to carefully monitor the effectiveness of the treatment platform and evaluate your overall progress. As with your face-to-face, in office visits, our licensed clinician may ask you to complete brief questionnaires/assessments about your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Homework may be assigned on a more regular basis in order to supplement the work we are doing remotely.

Method of Delivery of Tele-Therapy

Tele-therapy with Integrative Psychology Services will be provided through a HIPAA Compliant, synchronous, Video-conferencing platform, such as Doxy.me, Vsee, etc. or, in the case of an emergency, another non-HIPAA compliant program (regulations-permitted) teletherapy platform such as Face-time, Skype, etc. which are not HIPAA compliant but will still be in compliance with rules and regulations at that time of Medicare and other insurance panels. There will be no fee for clients to utilize these platforms.

Logging in

You will be sent a link from your clinician via email and you click on the link, which will, in most cases, directly connect to your clinician. In some cases, it may be necessary for you to download software, which will connect you to our licensed clinician. In some cases, you may need to click on the camera, microphone, and audio icon to set up your camera, microphone, and speakers. Most computers, tablets and smartphones will automatically detect its internal camera, microphone and speaker. If there is any difficulty you can call your clinician who will guide you through the steps to connect to them.

We suggest that you sign on at least 5 minutes prior to your session start time. You are responsible for initiating the connection with our licensed clinician at the time of your session.

Testing out your device, internet browser, etc.

We recommend you attempt to connect your device ahead of time to get familiar with how your device operates and to avoid unnecessary time spent with your clinician. Your licensed clinician will be available to connect with you ahead of time during your first session, so if you have any difficulty it can be addressed then. There are multiple videos and articles to help you better understand each videoconferencing platform. You can also test your device by following the directions on each platform.

For example, you can get information on Doxy.me, by going to website: <https://youtu.be/yJf9N9sjDLI>

Before our first scheduled session using a videoconferencing platform, we will schedule a time (5 minutes or less) to briefly test it out in the event that we need to troubleshoot any technical issues. In the past, these are the issues that have arisen and what is recommended to rectify them:

- Internet browser connectivity issues
 - Zoom and Doxy.ME are supported by the following internet browsers
 - For PC and Mac users: chrome or or firefox or safari
 - For Android devices: Chrome
 - For Mac/IOS Devices: Safari
- Choppy or frozen screen: find a location that is close to your internet router. You may need to find a space that consistently gets good reception

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- Low/no volume: make sure that your volume button on your device is turned on and all the way up
- No picture: your camera access is turned off

Procedures When Interruption of Services Occurs

In the event that technology fails or a disruption or decrease in the quality of the session occurs while we are engaged in remote psychotherapy, we may decide that it is best to discontinue the telehealth session. If this occurs, we agree that you can contact your clinician and re-start the session. If your clinician doesn't hear from you, he/she will contact you by telephone to discuss options. Therefore, it is recommended that you always have a phone available to you and that I am advised of the best number to reach you at the outset of each session.

These options may include:

- ending the treatment session
- trying to re-connect to Zoom or other Teletherapy platform
- continuing the session by phone
- MEET IN PERSON

Emergency Procedures/Verification of Location

Your safety is our primary concern. As such, your licensed clinician will want to know the location (address) in which you are during our session. Your licensed clinician will ask you to provide this information each time, but if your clinician neglects to ask you, we request that you inform your clinician of your current location. We are requiring this information in the event that your clinician has reason to believe that you are experiencing an emergency and they need to assist you in receiving immediate, life-saving care. In addition to providing your licensed clinician with your location at the outset of each remote session, you agree to provide your clinician with the name and contact information of a person whom your clinician is permitted to contact in the case that they have reason to believe you are at imminent risk.

Depending on your clinician's clinical, professional assessment of risk, your clinician may be required to verify that your emergency contact person is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and if necessary, call 911 and/or transport you to a hospital. In addition, your clinician may assess, and therefore require, that you create a safe environment at your location during the entire time that you are in treatment with your licensed clinician. This may mean disposing of all firearms and excess medication from your location.

Appropriate Environment/Conduct/Privacy/Confidentiality

Clients and Integrative Psychology Services both agree to:

- Avoid using mind altering substances during/prior to session
- Dress appropriately
- Conduct the session in an suitable room, such as a kitchen, living room or office (not a bedroom)
- Be in a private, confidential and secure location (closed door) in order to preserve confidentiality
- Refrain from having any other individuals present in in the room or online while the remote session is being conducted
- Not having anyone else participate in the session unless it has been previously agreed upon prior to the start of the session
- Not conduct other activities while in engaged in a remote psychotherapy session, such as driving, cooking, texting or working
- Not audio or video record sessions without first obtaining Integrative Psychology Services' explicit, written consent
- Be located in the state of New Jersey. Current laws and ethical guidelines require that both you (the client) and your licensed clinician be located in the state of New Jersey at the time services are rendered. This is because your clinician is only licensed in the state of New Jersey and at this time,

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Clinical Social Workers and Psychologists (as well as and other mental health professionals) are not permitted to provide psychotherapy across physical or virtual lines. We are hopeful that in the near future these laws will change, but for now, we must abide by the current rules.

- If you are living in a long-term care facility, please find a private place to meet with your clinician away from roommates, staff, and other personnel. In the event that you can't find a private setting or are unable to access one, a headset is recommended. Please discuss this with your clinician and they will attempt to make such arrangements.
- In circumstances where you are unable to have privacy, you are free to communicate to your clinician that you want the session either stopped or completely terminated.

Fees, Coverage and Reimbursement Information

Not all insurance policies include coverage for tele-therapy. Prior to agreeing to receiving remote psychotherapy services, Integrative Psychology Services will contact your insurance company to verify your benefits and to determine if any special billing or service delivery issues apply.

Currently, Medicare as well as other insurance companies recognize synchronous and asynchronous telecommunications as valid forms of tele-therapy. In order to meet the criteria for "telemedicine/telehealth", services can be provided through live, real-time, interactive, audio and visual, two-way communications such as video conferencing as well as via telephone communication.

Because the format for face to face, in-office psychotherapy sessions differ from remote psychotherapy services, they are billed differently. They require different medical billing codes, place of service codes and service descriptions. This is dictated by the insurance industry, not the offices of Integrative Psychology Services.

Financial Concerns When Technology Fails

There will be times when we might experience connectivity issues at the outset or during the remote psychotherapy session. If this occurs, the following billing procedures will apply:

- If we are unable to start the session due to connectivity issues, you will not be charged for the session
- If we mutually agree to end the treatment session due to connectivity issues, you/your insurance company will only be billed for the amount of time used
- If we try to re-connect, but are unsuccessful, and we agree to end the treatment session, you/your insurance company will only be billed for the amount of time used
- If we try to re-connect and are successful, I will make every attempt to provide you with the full amount of time originally scheduled for that session and you/your insurance company will be billed accordingly
- If we decide that it is in your best interest to continue the session by telephone, then the telephone policy stated in this document applies.

Telephone Sessions

The telephone is considered an asynchronous telecommunication platform and currently meets the criteria for tele-therapy. Telephone sessions are a covered, reimbursable benefit under Medicare and other insurance plans. Please note that federal, state and regulatory laws mandate that your licensed clinician and Integrative Psychology Services submit accurate information to insurance companies and on billing statements to all clients. Requests to omit factual, clinically relevant, location based or method of service delivery information will not be granted, as this constitutes insurance fraud, is illegal, and violates my professional ethics code, all which could result in the loss of or suspension of my license to practice clinical social work, psychology, or counseling may require substantial fines and ethical sanctions.

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CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to review Integrative Psychology Services **Use/Consent of Tele-therapy Policy!**
If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or how Zoom works, we encourage you to bring them to your clinician's attention so that you can discuss them.

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Use of Tele-therapy Policy signature page

Please let your clinician know if you are unable to sign in-person or send the "Use of Tele-therapy Policy signature page" to them. The clinician can indicate that you reviewed the consent form by checking the bottom of this form.

Date: _____

Client Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Client DOB: _____

On _____ I received a copy of the document entitled Use of Tele-therapy Policy for Integrative Psychology Services. I have been given an opportunity to review this document and my questions about this policy have been answered.

Signature of Client 1

Date

Please Print Name

Signature of Parent, Guardian or Personal Representative 1*

Date

Please Print Name

* If you are signing as a personal representative of an individual, please describe your legal authority to act for this individual (power of attorney, healthcare surrogate, etc.).

CLINICIAN'S SIGNATURE

DATE

____ Patient gives verbal consent but unable to sign due to unforeseen circumstances out of their control.

Please note that forms can be either faxed, emailed or mailed. Information below:

Fax number: (973) 992-4639

Email: info@drkeithgolin.net

Mail to: Dr. Keith Golin
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