

Moving Therapy Online

What do you have to know to Ethically and Legally bring Technology into your Psychotherapy Practice

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Agenda/Topics To Be Covered

- › What is Online Therapy?
- › Benefits and Potential Risks
- › Professional Considerations
- › Client and Therapist Suitable for Online Therapy?
- › Preferred Delivery Systems for Online Therapy
- › What to Look for in an Online Service as a Clinician
- › Future of Online Therapy

What is Online Therapy?

- › Interaction with another person or persons using technology
- › Four distinct parameters:
 1. Without any visual or audio experience of each other
 2. A purely audio experience of each other
 3. With visual and audio experience taking place at a distance
 4. With remote visual and audio experience taking place where one party uses software developed by the other

Goss, S., & Anthony, K. (Eds.). (2003). *Technology in Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.

Benefits of Online Therapy

- › Continuity of care for existing clients
- › Saves time and money for clients and therapists
- › Real time services and delayed time services available
- › Offers additional modalities of communication
- › Reach clients who might not otherwise access treatment
- › Clients have a larger range of clinicians that can meet their needs
- › Ability to collect more data about the client's living/working environment
- › Self-monitoring applications
- › Supervision and collaborating
- › Research benefits

Potential Risks of Online Therapy

- › Clients needing emergency and/or higher level care at a local level
- › Clients from different time zones and/or cultures
- › Inability to verify the client's true identity
- › Misinterpreting the text or symbols
- › Client is not appropriate for distance therapy
- › Breach of confidentiality: 79% of breaches are caused by employees, 18% are caused by 3rd party partners along with increased usage of mobile devices
- › Technical difficulties
- › Clinician is not qualified
- › Lack of evidence based research
- › Not maintaining best practice ethics and guidelines
- › Ignoring state and international laws

Preferred Delivery Systems for Online Therapy

- › Video teleconferencing: Skype vs. internet-based HIPAA compliant sites
- › Phone
- › Encrypted emails

Technology Considerations

- › Outsourced vs. in-house hosting of site and data
- › Concerns related to social media
- › Security considerations
- › Best practices for the technology business
- › Due diligence of providers

Professional Considerations

- › Comfort with the use of technology and access to a compliant delivery system
- › Professional licensure guidelines
- › Malpractice guidelines
- › HIPAA: Privacy laws initiated in 1996 regarding PHI
- › HITECH: Laws governing the electronic transmission of PHI initiated in 2010
- › State laws
- › International considerations
- › Payment issues/Insurance reimbursement
- CPT code descriptions can be found on the American Medical Association's CPT directory
Reimbursement details can be found through the American Telemedicine Association
- › Training/Certifications
- › Legal Forms (BAA and others)

Client and therapist suitability for online therapy

- › Evaluation of client and their situation.
- › Do you and the client have access to the necessary technology?
- › What is your and the client's comfort level with the technology?
- › Is there a safe and confidential environment to conduct the therapy?
- › Do you have a backup plan for the online therapy?
- › Are you meeting HIPAA and HITECH regulations?
- › Are you working within your standard of care?

What to look for in an online service as a clinician

- ▶ Licensed and qualified practitioners
- ▶ HIPAA and HITECH compliant services
 - Password protected
 - Encrypted email system
 - Personalized secure virtual waiting room
 - Ability to post secure messages in your virtual waiting room
 - Secure scheduling and billing/payment options
 - Secure electronic medical records
- ▶ Marketing advantages
- ▶ Website development
- ▶ Technical support

Future of Online Therapy

- ▶ Increase in the use of technology in psychotherapy (APA)
- ▶ Future trend most likely will be increased usage of video teleconferencing as a venue for therapy (APA)
- ▶ Improved technology to support HIPAA and HITECH secure video teleconferencing portals that will also be available on mobile devices
- ▶ National licensure or "Compact State"
- ▶ Certification as an e-therapist or certain professional qualifications
- ▶ Expanded insurance reimbursement for Online Therapy
- ▶ Data based research
- ▶ Social media

Resources

- ▶ American Distance Counseling Association: www.adca-online.org
- ▶ American Medical Association CPT directory: <https://catalog.ama-assn.org>
- ▶ American Psychological Association: www.apa.org
- ▶ American Telemedicine Association: www.americantelmed.org
- ▶ International Society for Mental Health Online: www.ismho.org
- ▶ Department of Health and Social Services: www.hhs.gov
- ▶ Jack Attorneys and Advisors; Atlanta, Georgia: Janine Bowen, Esquire: www.jack-law.com
- ▶ Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare: <http://jt.rsmjournals.com>
- ▶ Martha H Ireland PhD, RN, CS, CEDS: www.irelandphd.com
- ▶ Telemental Health Institute: www.telehealth.org
- ▶ Virtual Therapy Connect: www.virtualtherapyconnect.com

Clinical Effectiveness Con't

- ▶ Simulated therapies – Avatars


