

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELETHERAPY SERVICES with Tricia Porter, RSW.

The following serves as important information regarding the use of Teletherapy Services to ensure you are informed to provide consent to participate. Teletherapy is the provision of health care remotely using telecommunication tools (telephones, smartphones, and wireless devices, with or without a video). Therapy being offered online is a fairly new option in the field of mental health care. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that it may not be as effective as standard therapy and there may be challenges regarding privacy and confidentiality.

There are many benefits to teletherapy, however there are unique risks present to be aware of.

### **Risks of Teletherapy**

1. Data can be breached, regardless of level of privacy settings of the platform
2. Technical problems may occur
3. Confidentiality can be breached inadvertently
4. Treatment approaches may be affected, and video therapy may impact the client-therapist relationship.

At our initial teletherapy session, I will discuss steps I take to mitigate the above risks and I'm available to answer any questions you have.

### **In advance, arrange the following for all teletherapy sessions:**

- If you prefer to use a smartphone or tablet, please prop it up so the screen does not move around unnecessarily during the session.
- It is best to use Ethernet cable (network cable plugged right into your computer), but if not an option, then Wi-fi will still work, but may be spotty at time. To help with this, reduce the number of others using your wi-fi during the session.
- Avoid using public/free Wi-Fi.
- Prior to the teletherapy session, close any apps or programs that might be streaming and cause lag. This includes email, Word, and internet browsers.
- The device you are using (i.e., laptop, phone, or tablet) should be fully charged and plugged in if possible.
- Consider using headphones to help with hearing, but also support privacy by ensuring what I share is not heard by others in your home.
- The screen/webcam should be positioned so we can see each other's face and upper body.
- Ensure the room you are in has ideal lighting so I can see you properly.
- Aim to have a quiet, private place with no interruptions or distractions. A door that closes for confidentiality is important. If applicable, please make sure that children are engaged in a quiet activity so they will not disrupt the session.
- I'm able to ensure privacy on my end, however, there may be the occasional distraction, like the sound of a notification on my computer, or my pets may enter or request to leave the room, or my children may request help for urgent matters.

### **Requirements for Teletherapy**

I use Owl Practice which is a comprehensive web-based practice management system, that includes a video platform for sessions that does not rely on any third-party integrations or connections, ensuring privacy and security. Owl uses Canadian servers, keeps your data secure through encryption, and is compliant with PHIPA and OCSWSSW requirements.

Video sessions can be accessed on a variety of devices, including desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and a variety of mobile smartphones. It is recommended that all participants use devices with up-to-date operating systems and browsers for the best possible experience.

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If using an Apple device you can access the video session using Safari- you will need to go to settings- Safari- allow camera and microphone. Otherwise, you can use Chrome or Mozilla Firefox to access the portal and begin your video session. You may be asked to turn on your microphone and camera.

### **Setting up your account using OWL**

1. We begin by completing electronic intake forms and reviewing consent forms. These documents are submitted and uploaded to your client file.
2. Once intake paperwork is completed, you will be emailed a link to my Client Portal where you will sign in using the email address you have provided me and the temporary password I create. Once logged in, you can change your password by going to My Account and reset password.
3. This Portal will be where you will log in prior to each session to access the video platform.

### **Before the session:**

When a session is booked, you will receive a confirmation and/or a reminder email that will include a link to the portal to sign in and begin the video session. If you opt out of email reminders or confirmations, you can begin a video session by logging in to Client Portal at <https://oab.owlpractice.ca/triciaporter>, sign in, and go to My Account page, and click of Join Session button.

### **If problems occur:**

Due to the fact that loss of communication could happen at any point during teletherapy, these steps are suggested:

1. Close the window, and try again, by rejoining the session.
2. If problems still occur, I will contact you by phone, and will continue to keep the video open so I can see you, while using phone for audio.
3. I will track time lost due to technical difficulties and aim to extend the session to make up the missed time.
4. For times where the Internet connection is lost and I'm unable to reach you via phone and I have concerns about your safety or well-being, I may contact your emergency contact person, or emergency services to ensure your safety.

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELETHERAPY SERVICES**

Your signature below indicates you understand the following:

- Teletherapy sessions may be 30 or 60 minutes in duration
- There are possible risks to teletherapy as outlined above
- Your confidentiality still applies for teletherapy services, as do the limits to confidentiality.
- There will be no recording of the sessions
- I conduct all sessions in a private office on a password protected computer used solely by me
- Payment for teletherapy is expected following each session.
- It is important to be on time. If you need to cancel or change your appointment, you must notify me in advance by phone or email.
- I may determine that due to certain circumstances, teletherapy may no longer be appropriate, and that we should resume our sessions in-person when possible.

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**Your informed consent is necessary to proceed with counselling for yourself, your child, and/or your family. Please ask for clarification if you have any questions.**

Service begins with an intake where information is gathered and goals are discussed. Any changes to the treatment plan will be discussed with you in advance.

As a Social Worker it is not within my scope of practice to diagnose within the DSM-V.

Casenotes of your sessions will be written during or after the session, belong to Tricia Porter, and are stored securely, meeting standards of OCSWSSW and PHIPA.

My services are for therapeutic purpose and not to be sought for the use of collecting information for court purposes in cases of divorce or child custody/access.

The services of a Master of Social Work (MSW) may be covered by your extended health benefits for full or partial reimbursement. If your health benefits do not cover services by a MSW, I encourage you to ask your insurance carrier to have MSW services included.

Clients are billed directly by invoice after a session. E-transfer is accepted as payment upon receipt of invoice, and receipt will be emailed as proof of payment.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information shared in your sessions is confidential and will not be revealed to outside sources unless you have provided written permission.

Email as a means of contact regarding appointments or requests for a phone call are acceptable. Emails are not a secure method of contact and no personal information should be shared. All email contacts are printed and become part of the client file.

OWL offers Secure Messaging as an option for communication through the Client Portal. It offers a secure and private mode of messaging me directly with your concerns.

The following are the exceptions to confidentiality:

1. If a child or adult is in imminent danger or threat of serious harm to self, or another person.
2. If there is a disclosure or suspicion of any past or imminent abuse (emotional, neglect, physical, or sexual) to a child currently younger than 16 years.
3. In cases where there is a court order, a search warrant, an active missing person case with police and/or your file is subpoenaed.
4. When there is a disclosure of sexual abuse by a regulated health care professional.

In the above cases, the client would be notified about the duty to report to the Police, Children's Aid Society, or Professional College, or Hospital. When disclosure is required or allowed by law or by order of a court, only necessary information will be shared. All efforts will be made to include the client during the process.