



WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE

The following guidelines for conducting sessions were created by Dr. Bruce Ecker, co-director of the William James College Youth and Family Psychotherapy Services.

Initial Steps:

- Decisions regarding which clients are appropriate for Telebehavioral health (TBH) services will be made jointly by YFPS interns and their supervisors. Factors to consider include the severity of the disorder, and safety concerns (particularly of self-injury or violence and thus the need for emergency care), and whether or not the client has access to an appropriate web-connected device, such as a tablet, smart phone, or computer.
- All encounters must be done via a HIPAA-Compliant platform. However, the federal Office of Civil Rights has relaxed this requirement for a temporary period as we acclimate to Covid-19 related service needs.
- At the start of shifting to telehealth services, verify the client's (and guardian's if applicable) contact information (email, address and telephone numbers). Read the TBH consent (with the guardian present) and get verbal consent. Either email or mail a copy of the consent to client or the guardian and have them sign this.
- Test your technology with a colleague before the first time you use it and occasionally thereafter.

Conducting the Session:

- The first order of business in each session is to identify and/or confirm the client's location, including the address, to identify who else is in that location, and to ask if anyone else can hear what is spoken. Then, problem-solve how to ensure privacy unless this is intentionally a joint session. Also, be sure to get a back-up phone number in case the computer technology fails.
- Prior to each session, be sure that you have phone numbers for the local emergency services agency and/or hospital. If the client is in a new location, pause the session for a minute or two while you obtain this. In that case, say something like: "I need a few minutes to find where the emergency resources are in that area..." and you pause the session to do so. If the client says, "I don't need that," say something like, "I know...but I do it because it's my policy."
- You should have a list of emergency service phone numbers, by geographical location, available whenever you connect via TBH. Note that you handle emergencies in much the same way you would if a client was in the office; you maintain contact on-screen, find out if anyone in the client's location can sit with him/her, and use your phone to secure resources. Dial 911 and get police help if needed.

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They are subject to change.*



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- At the start of each session, anticipate with the client what you will do if someone walks into the room (on either side), if there are noises in the clinician's space you anticipate, or if the equipment fails. Also, encourage the client to put a sign on his/her door, noting "Do not Disturb." Do the same where you, the clinician, are. Also, at the start of each session, ask if anything is going on in the client's location that you, the clinician, should know about...and thereby might be relevant to the session.
- If anyone else joins the session, even child or a sibling, you need a release of information signed (verbal is initially okay, but chart this and then send a release via email).
- You need to document in the chart that this was a TBH session, the reason for using THB (to protect medical safety due to the risk of Covid-19), where the client was during the session, the extent to which there was privacy, and whether or not there were any interruptions during the session (e.g., someone entered either space, technical problems, etc.).

About the YFPS

The mission of Youth and Family Psychotherapy Services (YFPS) is to support the wellbeing of youth and families across a wide array of emotional, behavioral and developmental circumstances. We strive to serve our community through the delivery of exceptional culturally responsive care. Thus, our approach is both firmly rooted in evidence-based therapies and collaborative in nature. Patients play an active and critical role in personally relevant and meaningful treatment.

YFPS an arm of M. Gorman Associates, at William James College.

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