

# Informed Consent for Telebehavioral Health Services

This Informed Consent for Telebehavioral Healthcare contains important information focusing on engaging in our clinic's behavioral health services using the phone or over the Internet. Please read this carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

## Benefits and Risks of Telebehavioral Health

Telehealth refers to providing a healthcare service remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telehealth for behavioral health is that the patient and Behavioral Health Clinician (BHC) can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This has become a critical means of service delivery during the current Coronavirus situation, as it allows us to continue to provide care for your child or teen without the need to leave your home. Engagement in telehealth services, however, requires technical knowledge on both our parts to be successful. Although there are benefits of counseling via telehealth, there are some differences between in-person behavioral health care and telehealth, as well as some risks. For example:

- **Risks to confidentiality.** Because telehealth sessions take place outside of our clinic, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you and/or your child are not in a private place during the session. On our end we will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy, but it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. When appropriate, we may ask to meet with a child or adolescent patient individually, in which case we will ask that you help them to find a quiet and private place in the home, and that you and other family members respect their privacy when they are in their session. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in counseling or behavioral health consultation 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 the provision of telehealth services. 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 or companies. We have made every effort to make our video sessions as secure as possible by using a reputable communication platform that meets all HIPAA requirements.
- **Crisis management and intervention.** Usually, we will not engage in telehealth services with patients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in Telebehavioral Health services, we may ask you to help develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telehealth work. We realize such a plan will not be necessary or appropriate for all of our patients depending on age, type of consultation, and other circumstances. It is, however, an important consideration for those to whom it does apply.

- **Efficacy.** Most research shows that the efficacy of telehealth counseling is similar to that of in-person behavioral health treatment/consultation. However, there are some limitations that come with not being in the same room. For example, it can sometimes be difficult to fully understand non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, when working remotely. In addition, it can be more difficult to engage younger children.

### **Electronic Communications**

We will decide together which kind of telehealth communication medium to use. You will need to have certain computer or cell phone capabilities in order to effectively utilize video services. In some cases, it may be necessary to consult by phone instead. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telehealth.

### **Contact Outside of Sessions**

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. If an urgent issue arises, you should utilize our main clinic number to reach out. If we are working remotely or otherwise unavailable, our front desk or answering service will relay a message to our Behavioral Health Team. One of us will make every effort to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach us and feel that you cannot wait for a return call, contact the local crisis line or emergency room.

### **Confidentiality**

We have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telehealth services. 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. We will utilize updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is always a risk electronic communications could be compromised or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for Telebehavioral Health sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for your telehealth treatment or consultation).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in our Behavioral Health Informed Consent still apply in telehealth. A copy of this can be sent out upon request. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

### **Appropriateness of Behavioral Health Care via Telehealth**

We will let you know if we decide that telehealth services are no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss other options, including referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

### **Emergencies and Technology**

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting Telebehavioral Health sessions than in traditional in-person therapy or consultation. As previously noted, if we feel it is appropriate, we will work with you to create an emergency plan before engaging in telehealth services. In some situations, we may ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who we will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you or your child are having an emergency, do not attempt to call me back; instead, call 911 or the crisis line for the county in which you reside. A list of crisis lines and other helplines is included at the end of this document. Call our main clinic line after you have obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are *not* having an emergency, disconnect from the session and we will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telehealth platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within five (5) minutes, then please contact the front desk and they will get in touch with me.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

### **Fees**

The same fee rates, including copays and patient deductibles will apply for Telebehavioral Health as apply for in-person sessions or consultations. Based on the information we have available to us, almost all major insurance companies are currently covering the cost of telehealth visits during the Coronavirus crisis. However, this is not something that we can guarantee, especially given the rapidly changing circumstances surrounding the local, statewide, and federal response to the Coronavirus outbreak. If you have questions or concerns about your insurance coverage, please contact your insurance company prior to engaging in Telebehavioral Health sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

### **Records**

Telehealth sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. We will maintain a record of our session in the same way we maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

### **Informed Consent**

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that was agreed to at the outset of your/your child's care at Metropolitan Pediatrics and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

***By choosing to continue this virtual visit, I am consenting to the care, treatment, and payment process related to this virtual service.***

### **CRISIS LINE RESOURCES**

**Washington County Crisis Line:** 503-291-9111

**Clackamas County Crisis Line:** 503-655-8585

**Multnomah County Crisis Line:** 503- 988-4888

**Clark County Crisis Line:** 360-696-9560

**Trevor Project** (LGBTQ crisis support line):  
1-866-488-7386

**Lines for Life YOUTHLINE:**

▶ Call: 877-968-8491

▶ Text: teen2teen to 839863

▶ Chat: [www.oregonyouthline.org](http://www.oregonyouthline.org)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**  
1-800-273-TALK