



## Informed Consent for Telehealth Services

Welcome to The Balancing Bar. This Informed Consent for Telehealth Services contains important information focusing on providing psychotherapy services using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### What is Telemental Health?

Telehealth is a broad term that refers to mental health services and information provided electronically or with the use of technology. I understand telehealth counseling may include mental health education, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, and referrals to resources. Telehealth counseling with The Balancing Bar, LLC will occur via a HIPAA compliant telehealth platform called SimplePractice or a telephone conversation.

### Benefits and Risks of Telehealth

Telehealth refers to providing Psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telehealth is that the patient and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location however, the client **MUST BE IN GEORGIA**. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telehealth, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telehealth, there are some differences between in-person treatment and telehealth and some risks. For example:

- **Risks to confidentiality** As telehealth sessions take place outside of your therapy office; other people can overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end, I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. However, you need to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also vital for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other devices. You should participate in therapy 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 telehealth. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might access our private conversation, or unauthorized people or companies could access stored data.
- **Crisis management and intervention** Usually, I will not engage in telehealth with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. We may not have

an option of in-person services presently, but you may require a higher level of services in a crisis situation. Before engaging in telehealth, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telehealth work.

## **Electronic Communications**

You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telehealth services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telehealth.

I only use email communication for communication between sessions with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges with my office should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email and prefer that you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my email and do not respond immediately. Therefore, these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. However, if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach me by phone. I will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, and if you need immediate attention, contact the National Suicide Hotline, Georgia Crisis Access Line (GCAL), or visit the nearest emergency room. If I am unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence, if necessary.

## **Confidentiality**

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to do my best to protect all communications that are a part of telehealth services. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and backup systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telehealth sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telehealth).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Informed Consent **for Psychotherapy Services** still apply in telehealth. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

## **Appropriateness of Telehealth**

At the moment, I am not offering in-person sessions. I will let you know if I decide that telehealth is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. If you decide telehealth is not optimal for you, it

is important to let me know. We will discuss options of engaging in 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 telehealth than in traditional in-person treatment. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telehealth services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and whom I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as technological connection failure, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 9-1-1, Georgia Crisis Access Line at 1-800-715-4225, National Suicide Hotline 1-800-784-2433 or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

Emergency situations include if I have thought about hurting or killing either another person or myself, if I have hallucinations, if I am in a life threatening or emergency situation of any kind, having uncontrollable emotional reactions, or if I am dysfunctional due to abusing alcohol or drugs.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session, and I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-connect you via SimplePractice, the telehealth platform on which we agreed to conduct treatment. If I do not connect via the telehealth platform within two (2) minutes, then call me on the phone number I provided you (478-207-7840).

## **Fees**

The same fee rates will apply for telehealth as applying for in-person therapy. Some insurers are waiving co-pays during this time. You must contact your insurer to determine if applicable co-pays or fees you are responsible for. Insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic therapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company before engaging in telehealth sessions to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

If there is a technological failure and we cannot resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

## **Records**

The telehealth sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our sessions in the same way; I 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 we agreed to at the outset of our treatment together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above. I understand that if I have any questions, I am free to discuss them with my provider.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charkela Jenea Molden, Ed.S, LPC, NCC

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Date