

Recommending Obtaining Continuing Education in Providing Telepsychological Services

Telepsychology and technology-enhanced psychology practice have greatly increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and will likely continue to be utilized in future psychological practice. In response to the increased need for telepsychological services, the Board is strongly advising licensees to obtain at least three hours of continuing education in the provision of telepsychology services. The Board is recommending that these hours be completed as soon as possible. Further, because of the rapid rate at which technology changes, the Board is recommended that psychologists continue to regularly complete continuing education in this area, rather than on a one time basis.

Prior to COVID-19, many psychologists had not previously engaged in telepsychology with their clients or patients. Then with the onset of the pandemic many psychologists were thrown into this medium with little guidance or training. For this reason, the Board is advising that psychologists complete continuing education in this area on an ongoing basis.

There are legal and ethical considerations that are specific to online sessions, which include among other issues the following:

- A psychologist needs to ensure a confidential setting, data security and the avoidance of unsecure platforms.
- A psychologist needs to ensure that there is informed consent addressing the specific concerns related to telepsychology.
- A psychologist needs the ability to ensure safety over the electronic platform.
- A psychologist needs to meet licensure requirements of different jurisdictions, if practicing across state lines.
- There may be some situations where it is not appropriate for psychological services to be held in a virtual setting – i.e., for some individuals, some diagnoses, or some age groups.
- It is incumbent upon the psychologist to ensure that the client or patient understands how to use the technology and any potential risks associated with its use.

In addition, telepsychology does not just mean videoconferencing, but also includes telephone communications, chats, texts and emails, among other electronic mediums.

Other issues for psychologists to consider are whether telepsychological services can be used for psychological testing and assessment and, if so, how to ensure the integrity of the testing. Another consideration is whether telepsychology can be utilized for group therapy and whether all members of the group are comfortable with this medium and ensuring confidentiality of the sessions.

Therefore, because of the various serious implications of the use of telepsychology, some of which have been set forth above, the Board is recommending continuing education in this area. Please review the Board's advisory statement on the provision of electronic services, for licensure issues regarding the delivery of telepsychology, found at:

<http://www.ncpsychologyboard.org/office/ElectronicServices.htm>.

For addition information, review the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology, which are found at:

<https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology>