



INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

This Informed Consent for telemental health sessions contains important provisions for providing counseling services online using telecommunications. All telemental health services will be provided by a trained mental health professional who has been familiarized with processes and standards of providing telemental health services in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Please review this document and carefully, and let your counselor know if you have any questions or concerns.

Benefits and Risks of Telemental Health

Telemental health refers to providing counseling services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telemental health is that your child and the school counselor can engage in counseling services while your child is engaging in off-campus instruction. This will be helpful in ensuring that all students who are engaging in distance learning still have access to the same counseling services available to students attending on-campus. Although there are benefits of telemental health, there are some differences between in-person counseling and telemental health services, as well as some risks. For example:

Risks to confidentiality. Because telemental health sessions take place outside of the counselor's private office, there is potential for others to overhear sessions. The counselor will take reasonable steps to ensure your child's privacy. It is important for you to locate an appropriate place in your home for your child's session where interruptions would be minimal. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your child's session if they are using your cell phone or other device. Your child should participate in counseling only while in a room or area where other people cannot overhear the conversation. Specifically, that the location is away from distractions and allows for the same privacy as a face-to-face counseling session (i.e., dining room table while siblings work/play in the living room).

Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact the delivery of tele-mental health 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.

Crisis management and intervention. It is preferred that a parent be home during the telemental health session to be able to respond to any crises that may arise (as evidenced by giving verbal consent at the beginning of the telemental session). Parents will be required to provide the counselor a phone number so they can be reached immediately during the session in the event that a crisis situation occurs during your child's telemental health session.

Efficacy. Most research shows that telemental health is as effective as in-person counseling. However, some counselors believe that something is lost by not being in the same room for the counseling session. During states of emergency that may lead to closure of physical school facilities, telemental health is the recommended medium to continue counseling services.

Electronic Communications

You and your child's counselor will decide together which online format will be most effective and convenient for your child. This will require specific computer or cell phone systems to access telemental health services. You are solely responsible for obtaining any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telemental health.

For communication between sessions, use email or phone to communicate with your child's counselor. You should be aware that the counselor cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated via email. Email communication **should not** be used if there is an emergency with your child as the counselor may not check email multiple times per day. In the event of a counseling emergency please contact one of the community agencies listed at the end of this consent form for immediate services.

Confidentiality

Counselors have a legal and ethical responsibility to protect all communications that are a part of face-to-face and telemental health. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that the counselor cannot guarantee communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to the communications. Counselors will use a secure, non-public facing medium for tele-mental health to keep your child's 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 such communications (for example, only using secure networks for telemental health sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telemental health).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that apply to in person counseling still apply to telemental health, all information shared in the session is confidential with the **exception** of the following: if your child discloses that they are a danger to themselves or a danger to others, if they disclose that they, or another youth or elderly adult, are being abused or neglected, or a court issues a subpoena.

Appropriateness of Telemental Health

In the event that telemental health is no longer the most appropriate method to continue counseling services for your child, the counselor will refer you to resources in the community that would be better suited to support the needs of your child.

Records

The telemental health sessions shall not be audio/video recorded in any way by either the counselor, student, or the parent unless agreed to by all parties. Counselors will document the counseling session in the same way they maintain records of in-person sessions.

Community Crisis Referral Resources

Sigma Mental Health Urgent Care
18587 Sigma Road
Suite 260
San Antonio, Texas 78258
(210) 871-0188

Clarity Child Guidance Center
8535 Tom Slick Drive, San Antonio
(210) 616-0300

San Antonio Behavioral Hospital
8550 Huebner Road, San Antonio
(210) 541-5300
Laurel Ridge Treatment Center
17720 Corporate Woods Drive, San Antonio
(210) 491-9400

Center for Health Care Services
227 Drexel, San Antonio
24/7 Crisis Number: (210) 223-7233

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

SAMHSA's The Disaster Distress Helpline
1-800-985-5990

Parent/Legal Guardian Informed Consent: Telemental Health Services for a Minor

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that was agreed to for in-person school counseling services and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

I agree to allow my child, _____, to receive telemental health services from the school counselor employed by his/her school _____ (school name), while my child is engaged in off-campus instruction.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Emergency Phone Number