**Internship Checklist for Distance Counseling Services during Covid-19 Pandemic**

# Preparing Yourself for Providing Distance Counseling BEFORE You Begin Working with Clients

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|  | Practice with your scope of competence which requires you and your site supervisor to **complete appropriate training**. Access the free 12-hour PESI digital seminar on distance counseling (you may count these direct hours under professional development).   1. Access the [two-day online training](https://catalog.pesi.com/item/telehealth-mental-health-professionals-2day-distance-therapy-training-52191) purchase page. 2. Sign in or create an account to complete the required information. 3. Enter the code TELEFREE into the Distance Code box to reduce the cost from $439.99 to $0. 4. Complete the remaining steps to confirm your purchase. 5. Go into your account to see the options to launch the viewer or download the seminar and handouts. 6. Complete the seminar training, take the quiz, and complete the evaluation. 7. You may view your CE Certificate once you have completed the steps above. 8. Submit a copy of the final CE Certificate to Dr. Wolf, Clinical Coordinator, at [WKU.CNS.clinical.coordinator@gmail.com](mailto:WKU.CNS.clinical.coordinator@gmail.com) BEFORE you begin providing distance counseling services to clients. |
|  | Review and become familiar with the **related laws and ethics on distance counseling**   * [201 KAR 36:040 Definitions, Responsibility to Clients, and Confidentiality](file:///D:\Documents\COUNSELING\WKU%20Counseling\Clinical%20Coordinator\CC%20Portfolios\o%09http:\lpc.ky.gov\Laws%20and%20Regulations\Laws%20and%20Regulations%20Booklet.pdf) (p. 14-15) * [201 KAR 36:045 Distance Counseling](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/201/036/045.pdf) * [ACA Code of Ethics (2014) Section §H: Distance Counseling, Technology, and Social Media](https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/ethics#2014code) (p. 17-18) * Other resources are listed below |
|  | Work with your site supervisor to revise your informed consent document and ensure you address distance counseling risks and challenges before you see clients using that method (see TFCC example). |
|  | Ensure you have adequate internet connectivity for video conferencing or can you safely get to a place that provides access. You may be able to access the WKU internet from a remote spot or parking lot. |
|  | Use a password-protected, secure internet connection, not public or unsecured WiFi? If you cannot, it increases the risk of being hacked so you will need to address the limits of confidentiality with clients. |
|  | Check that your antivirus/antimalware protection is up-to-date to prevent being hacked? CNET, a reputable source & recommends this [list of free software](https://download.cnet.com/s/security-antivirus/windows/). Contact WKU IT Helpdesk at 270-745-7000 for support. |
|  | Ensure your technology platform consistent with HIPAA-compliant practices. WKU’s Zoom Pro contract is not currently [HIPAA compliant](https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-hipaa.pdf). However, [HHS.gov issued a statement](https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html) waiving penalties for telehealth during the crisis but you must notify clients of privacy risks and enable all available encryption and privacy modes and measures when using such applications. You may NOT use public applications like Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok. |
|  | If using Zoom (recommended), test out your Zoom account at <https://wku.zoom.us> to ensure the technology is working on your end before connecting with your client. If you prefer to use a background picture to block out the room behind you, within an active Zoom meeting, click the arrow next to Video and follow the path to upload and select a different background setting (Video Settings > Virtual Background). You do not need a green screen to use the background image, but wearing green or blue will likely impact the way the picture appears. So playing with this feature before your client meeting is key so it minimizes rather than creates a distraction.  Contact WKU IT Helpdesk at 270-745-7000 for support if needed. |
|  | Schedule client meetings in Zoom in advance, each with a unique meeting ID (you may wish to schedule an extra 15 minutes for first-time meetings or test out the software applications with clients in advance):   1. Log into your Zoom account (<https://wku.zoom.us>) 2. Click on **Schedule a Meeting** and enter minimal client identifying information with the date and time of the scheduled appointment (consider any time zone differences) 3. Under Meeting ID, select **Generate Automatically** to create a unique identifier clients so not overlap 4. If you wish to set a recurring weekly meeting, check that option. 5. Click **Save** (the other default settings are fine – do NOT record the meeting until you are in the meeting and have obtained the client’s permission if you need it for your case presentation) 6. Once your meeting is scheduled, click on **Copy the Invitation** and provide client a copy of the meeting connection details to include the meeting time, Zoom link, Meeting ID, One tap mobile (Chicago) and phone number (Chicago); the rest of the information can be deleted to streamline the information and avoid confusion. This allows your clients to easily connect via their device or phone. 7. Remind clients that they will need to click on the link and then a small pop up window will appear on their device and they will have to click on the **Zoom Meetings** and **Open Link** to open Zoom. If they are planning to use an Android or Apple device, they can download the Zoom app in advance. 8. Identify a back-up plan in case of technical difficulties and let the client know what that is. Provide clients an alternative means to communicate with you. You may wish to provide them your phone number as a backup in case they have trouble logging into Zoom. If you do not wish to provide your personal home/cell number, you can create a free [Google Voice](https://voice.google.com/) number that you can forward to your home/cell instead. |
|  | Create a site supervisor approved email template that includes the client appointment link and information related to their distance counseling appointment (e.g., copy of informed consent, etc.) |
|  | Work with your site supervisor to identify how you will properly complete, submit, and store case notes electronically within 48 hours of providing the distance counseling to client (907 KAR 3:170) |

# Preparing Your Clients for Providing Distance Counseling

**Preparing to host the client meeting**

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|  | If working away from your site, ensure your site supervisor is aware of your client meeting and you establish a quick and easy way to reach them in the event you need their assistance. |
|  | Ensure you connect from a professional, private, and quiet location that is away from distractions. Use headphones for additional security. |
|  | Make sure the room is well lit and you are fully in few of the camera so the client can see you well (e.g., consider window glares, shadows, and camera positioning). |
|  | Improve eye contact by positioning your camera and/or the Zoom window so that it’s easy to look both at the camera and the client on screen. |
|  | Consider removing personal items or distractions in the background including animals and people. |
|  | Turn off all apps and notifications on your computer or smartphone. Ask the client to do the same. |
|  | Check the picture and audio quality. Make sure you have the correct microphone and webcam selected and that you are not muted. |

**Screen your clients to determine if distance counseling services are appropriate for them**

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|  | Consider the client’s clinical, cognitive, intellectual, emotional, physical, linguistical, and functional capability to ensure they can effectively participate in distance counseling. Verify clients understand the purpose and operation of technology applications and follow up with clients to correct possible misconceptions, discover appropriate use, and assess subsequent steps (ACA 2014, H.4.c). |
|  | Consider client safety (e.g., suicidality) and health concerns. If they require a higher level of care, discuss with your site supervisor and consider referring them to a professional counselor. |
|  | Confirm client wishes to use distance counseling as an alternative method to receive services (ACA 2014, H.2.a) |
|  | Confirm the client has technology resources for a videoconference (e.g, webcam/smartphone and internet). |
|  | Ensure client has adequate internet connectivity for videoconferencing. Some internet companies in our region are offering [free broadband access](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001zrjn1vd4k20j-ae0gb3zdNZvi94O0R5uphwCxEHnrXJD4ynXlGXcra4HGKhbRkk3ZzW5gVGHapVbMzGjvRy0b_KL5ThwMtEnZxsRaESZEqXHDFsUHo_UfvyMdZ-bY7M5ZXlytM_2OR9K6M1IQntIGS3c65QzAtaYpozrl5gql4f5myXMlHfwW34m0cTKl50AMQQ3pyxPs0KfqGpKxQP8wK68foMcQYOZhBYBx6rIFDenrO3m3sxkvSUoLH9I7DYGXfDG_poP68o=&c=ddBrHDOKHrG3u1UgpD2I_Hb-3fK2bFyFExoIIGDgDRMISyKjVh8EZg==&ch=ddxK8f0PcfiznyuSi4VP2TyQOSX8P611TCi1IRJiWg4Z6URWavISHA==) for 60 days to households with a K-12 or college student during the pandemic so refer them to those resources if necessary. |
|  | Confirm your client can use a password-protected, secure internet connection (not public or unsecured WiFi).  If not, address the increased risk of being hacked and potential limits of confidentiality. |
|  | Check that your client has anti-virus/anti-malware protection is up-to-date to prevent being hacked.  CNET, a reputable source, recommends this [list of free software](https://download.cnet.com/s/security-antivirus/windows/). |
|  | Consider client’s comfort in using technology and ensure they can log in and effectively use the technology. You may wish to do a brief test meeting to let them know how Zoom works and ensure they will be able to access it for their scheduled appointment. This may also help relieve anxiety about using that method. |
|  | Ensure the client has a private and quiet location where they can participate in the online session. However, be mindful that others in the background may overhear your conversation if they are not wearing headphones. |
|  | Provide clients with a copy of the revised informed consent to review in advance and consider going over that with them before your first distance counseling meeting, especially pointing out the differences for distance counseling. If parent/guardian permission is required, obtain it. |
|  | Notify clients that Zoom or other third-party applications potentially introduce privacy risks |

**Hosting the client meeting**

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|  | Verify the client’s identity. If not seen on video, confirm their identity using other details such as code words, numbers, graphics, or other nondescript identifiers. |
|  | Plan for disconnections and crisis in advance:   1. Provide your location and alternate contact method (e.g., phone number) 2. Confirm client’s location and a phone number where the client can be reached if disconnected. 3. Verify emergency contact information 4. If meeting with a minor, find out where the adult will be and their contact info 5. Identify emergency procedures to follow if the counselor is not available. 6. Ensure they are aware of local resources (see <https://www.wku.edu/talleycounseling/resources.php>) |
|  | Review importance of privacy at your location and theirs. Ask that individuals present in the room be within view of the camera so the intern is aware of who is participating. |
|  | Confirm that nobody will record the session without permission. |
|  | Ask the client to turn off all apps and notifications on their computer or smartphone to avoid distractions. |
|  | Go over the informed consent document carefully and ensure it addresses the information on telehealth (see sample). Discuss the potential risks/benefits of telehealth sessions to include the following:   * Limitations and benefits of engaging in distance counseling * Possibility of technology failure and alternative means of connecting * Cultural and/or language differences that may affect delivery of services * How verbal and non-verbal cues may look different with distance counseling and how to prevent and address potential misunderstandings arising from the lack of visual cues and voice intonations * Continued need to maintain professional boundaries regarding appropriate use of technology * When and how counselor will schedule appointments, respond to routine electronic messages between scheduled visits, and anticipated response time. * In what circumstances alternative means of communication will be used for emergency purposes * Potential risks and limits to confidentiality related to technology and duty to warn legal requirements * Who else may have access to communications and client case notes; how information will be stored * Whether the client or counselor may elect to discontinue distance counseling and refer to another provider if distance counseling is not effective or beneficial.   Refer to the following for more specific guidance:   * 201 KAR 36:045 [Distance Counseling](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/201/036/045.pdf) * 201 KAR 36:040 [Responsibility to clients and Confidentiality](http://lpc.ky.gov/Laws%20and%20Regulations/Laws%20and%20Regulations%20Booklet.pdf) (p. 14-15) * [ACA Code of Ethics (2014) Section §H: Distance Counseling, Technology, and Social Media](https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/ethics#2014code) (p. 17-18) |
|  | Obtain a signed informed consent from your client(s) or client’s parent or legal representative. It may be provided to the client in advance and scanned to the intern or signed electronically (e.g., DocHub, DocuSign). |
|  | Conduct the session mostly like you would an in-person session. Be yourself. |

**Notes**

* As you consider offering professional services via tele-health, it is important for health care practice owners and providers to always comply with state telehealth laws and regulations, including professional licensure, scope of practice, standard of care and client consent requirements.
* **CACREP is not waiving the minimum requirement of direct and indirect service hours for Practicum and Internship. They issued** a statement on 3/18/20 indicating that it “is an expectation that programs will continue to meet the CACREP standards.” They addressed their flexibility in meeting these standards through 6/30/21 to include:
  + No prohibitions against telemental health or distance supervision.
  + Programs using either one of these as alternative methods to meet curricular needs must ensure that students and site supervisors are trained to use this modality and that this modality is accepted by the respective state licensing board.
  + The use of roleplays and simulations are not an appropriate substitute for direct hours.
  + Students who are unable to complete practicum requirements at this time, upon return to normal practice may enroll in Internship in the same term. However, the student must successfully complete all practicum requirements prior to commencing with Internship. Any documented extra direct hours, beyond the requisite 40 hours, completed during Practicum may be counted towards Internship (nor normally accepted)
  + Programs may extend the length of the term to complete program requirements if necessary at no additional cost to the student.
* **KY LPC regulations** require counselors to be licensed to practice where the counselor is located AND where client is domiciled (place of residence). However, there have been additional statements issued related to the pandemic:
  + An email on 3/17/20 from the KY LPC Board acknowledged that the “Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic is altering life dramatically for everyone, but in particular for the most vulnerable, including those with behavioral health issues. As such, the Board would like to clarify, where it can, issues related to the appropriate delivery of professional counseling services during this public health crisis. It is clear from the number of questions received by our Board Administrator that licensees recognize that distance counseling or telehealth may be the safest mechanism to ensure that vital behavioral health services, including professional counseling, are delivered in an uninterrupted manner…. Licensees wishing to utilize Telehealth for service delivery should review the current regulations governing the delivery of Telehealth services, including, but not limited to, 907 KAR 3:170 (the Telehealth regulation from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services) and our specific Counseling Regulations (201 KAR 36:040, Section 6 and 201 KAR 36:045). These regulations outline the standards for providing behavioral health services via Telehealth. Regarding training and continuing education hours specific to Telehealth and Distance Counseling, the Board reminds licensees that they cannot practice outside their area of competence. This includes training and competence specific to the Telehealth platform they utilize…. “
  + The current regulation does not speak to interns. However, on 3/17/20, KCA President-Elect shared the KY LPC Board Chair’s statement: “With appropriate supervision, these students clearly could be a solid source of support for clients during the crisis and telehealth may be the only safe medium for service provision.“
  + An email to licensed counselors on 3/23/20 stated “During the recent board meeting on Friday, March 20, the following items where discussed in regards to telehealth in the hopes of keeping everyone safe during the COVID-19 crisis. Many have asked about what training needs to be completed to be able to provide telehealth to your clients.  In order for counselors (LPCCs and LPCAs) to be able to provide telehealth, you must have some reasonable form or type of education, training or experience to ensure the competency required to counsel clients via teleconferencing means.  There is no mandatory training or set amount of hours needed set by the LPC Board.  This is a judgement that you will need to make to ensure your competency. The Board is currently working on emergency regulation changes in the following areas: NOTE: THESE CHANGES ARE NOT IN EFFECT UNTIL GOVERNOR BESHEAR SIGNS THE EMERGENCY ORDER.  ALL LICENSEES WILL BE NOTIFIED ONCE THEY ARE IN EFFECT.
    - Telephonic counseling:  Due to internet issues and possible system overloads for so many counseling sessions done over specific platforms, the Board is working to allow counseling sessions via telephone.  These hours would count as direct time.  However, please note that the Board has no jurisdiction regarding reimbursement for telehealth or telephonic services.
    - HIPAA:  The Board is looking to relax some of the HIPAA complaint platform requirements with the understanding that a good faith effort is maximized by the LPCA or LPCC.
    - The emergency regulation would allow interns to provide telehealth.
    - Counseling across state lines:  The Board recognizes that KY LPCC/A’s may have previously established relationships with clients in which one or both of the parties may have been displaced to another state due to issues related to Covid 19.  The LPCC/A may continue to provide counseling via telehealth/telephonic mediums to these previously established clients during this declared state of emergency.”
    - Please note that these emergency regulations would not be a first line approach.  We recommend you first try to complete telehealth by a HIPAA compliant, video conferencing platform before using these other means.
* **Student liability insurance policies** such as ACA (HPSO) and NBCC (Lockton Affinity) do not limit telehealth.
  + A statement from HPSO received on 3/18/20 indicated “The policy does not have a limitation as to how professional services are delivered, in person or via technology. Rather, the policy requires that healthcare providers are appropriately licensed to provide professional services and comply with state, federal and facility guidelines relative to scope of practice and practice setting. “

**Regulations and Guideline Resources**

* [201 KAR 36:040 Definitions, Responsibility to Clients, and Confidentiality](file:///D:\Documents\COUNSELING\WKU%20Counseling\Clinical%20Coordinator\CC%20Portfolios\o%09http:\lpc.ky.gov\Laws%20and%20Regulations\Laws%20and%20Regulations%20Booklet.pdf) (p. 14-15)
* [201 KAR 36:045 Distance Counseling](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/201/036/045.pdf)
* [907 KAR 3:170 Telehealth regulation from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services](https://casetext.com/regulation/kentucky-administrative-regulations/title-907-cabinet-for-health-and-family-services-department-for-medicaid-services/chapter-3-payment-and-services/section-907-kar-3170-effective-until-6142026telehealth-service-coverage-and-reimbursement)
* [ACA Code of Ethics (2014) Section §H: Distance Counseling, Technology, and Social Media](https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/ethics#2014code) (p. 17-18)
* [HHS Notification of enforcement discretion for telehealth remote communications during the Covid-19 nationwide public emergency](https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html).
* [Zoom HIPAA compliance guide](https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-hipaa.pdf) and how Zoom supports each HIPAA standard

**Association Statements and Resources**

* AAMFT: [Coronavirus AAMFT Status](https://www.aamft.org/Events/Coronavirus-Event-Status-Updates.aspx?WebsiteKey=8e8c9bd6-0b71-4cd1-a5ab-013b5f855b01)
* ACA: [Telehealth Information and Counselors in Health Care](https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/mental-health-resources/trauma-disaster/telehealth-information-and-counselors-in-health-care)
* APA: [COVID-19 and psychology services: How to protect your patients and your practice](https://www.apaservices.org/practice/news/covid19-psychology-services-protection)
* APA Checklist: [Office and technology checklist for telepsychological services](https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/telepsychological-services-checklist)
* HPSO: [A risk management resource to manage liability in the healthcare practice](https://aonaffinity-blob-cdn.azureedge.net/affinitytemplate-dev/media/nationalfloodservices/media/documents/cna_hp17-14_060117_cf_prod_sec.pdf). *Heathcare Perspective, 14*.
* NASW: [Coronavirus (COVID-19)](https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/Coronavirus)