PRACTICE OPERATIONS MANUAL

Telehealth

powerdiary

TELEHEALTH

Here's where we describe core expectations for the implementation of Telehealth, including technology, risk management and consent.

Review these policies at least annually for any needed updates.

THE TELEHEALTH EXPERIENCE

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a pleasant, relaxed and comfortable experience for the client during Telehealth appointments.

Policy

- Client considerations, including physical, mental and cultural should be recorded and maintained on the client's profile
- All sessions should commence with some light small talk to establish connection and rapport
- Telehealth should be used as a tool by practitioners when factors prevent traditional healthcare from taking place, or when it is preferred by the client.

Procedure

Prior to the session

Practitioners are required to:

- Ensure the client has been sent a Telehealth link with relevant instructions on how to connect to the session, including troubleshooting
- Review the client's profile for any special needs or considerations and plan their session accordingly
- Ensure equipment has been checked, has enough battery and their internet connection is strong and secure
- Try not to appear rushed or distracted- take a deep breath and relax the shoulders, close all applications on the screen, and do not start the call until the practitioner is seated and feels focused

During the session

- Commence the session with an introduction and provide the client an overview of how the session will be run- the practitioner explains the limitations of Telehealth and confirms the client's understanding before proceeding
- Reduce distraction by staying within the screen- do not move around the room unless necessary or appropriate
- Maintain appropriate eye gaze, including avoiding looking down or away
- Check that the client is comfortable and if they have special needs, that the plan is meeting their needs- adjust accordingly

TECHNOLOGY PROBLEMS

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate a seamless experience for clients. The practice must ensure that where technology issues arise, that the situation is handled efficiently, professionally and with the client's confidentiality in mind.

Policy

Where technology issues affect the quality of the session, the session should be ended and alternate arrangements put in place for another session

Client confidentiality is of the utmost importance, and should be considered when troubleshooting technology issues- do not walk around in open spaces to get 'better phone signal' and ensure, if the issue is at the client's end, that they continue to be in a private environment

Procedure

At the start of the session, ensure you have alternate contact information for the client in case of technical issues

Make a clear plan with the client for what will happen if a technology issue occurs

Phone Calls

If audio on a call is not clear, troubleshoot whether the issue is with the practitioner phone or the client's

Practitioner phone issue

- If your phone is the issue and you are using a mobile, advise the client that you will try to find another location with better phone reception, then call them again
- If after moving to another private location you cannot get clear audio, ask the client if they would like to continue or end the session
- If they wish to continue, find another location with good mobile phone reception and retry the process

Client phone issue

- Politely advise the client that the audio is not clear and ask if there is somewhere they could relocate to, in order to continue the call with better phone reception
- If after moving to another private location you cannot get clear audio, ask the client if they would like to continue or end the session
- If they wish to continue, ask the client to find another location with good mobile phone reception and retry the process

Video Calls

- If the video gets disconnected, try to reconnect to the session
- If you or the client cannot reconnect to the video session, or if the video quality is poor and affecting the consultation, the session will be changed to a phone consult if practicable

RISK MANAGEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide safe, quality care by the identification of risks and hazards that may have a negative impact on the safety and confidentiality of the client, and to provide for the implementation of safeguards and contingency plans to prevent harm.

Policy

- Prior to the session commencing, current contact details of the client and their alternate contacts should be confirmed and updated as needed in Power Diary
- The client's current address should be recorded in Power Diary
- Clients should not be offered Telehealth sessions if it is not clinically appropriate

Procedure

Prior to commencing Telehealth

Prior to offering or commencing Telehealth with a client, client-specific risks should be considered- including whether it is clinically appropriate for a client to receive care via Telehealth.

- Talk to the client about the best place for them to access their Telehealth session, taking into consideration their living arrangements and cultural expectations at home where they will be free of distractions and interruptions
- Ensure the client understands any risks to their privacy and confidentiality, for example that the session may be overheard by others in their household if they are in a communal area and are not using headphones.
- Ensure that current contact details of at least two alternate contacts are available in case of emergency
- Where possible, gather a list of crisis services in the area for reference

During a Call

Establish the client's location and surroundings at the start of the session- ask simple questions to ensure it's safe, private and secure for them to talk

Contingency when a problem arises during a Telehealth session

- If a problem arises during a Telehealth session, or you are concerned for the client's safety and wellbeing, where appropriate- contact the client's alternative contacts
- If you are unable to reach the alternate contacts, and it is appropriate, contact crisis services or emergency services in the client's area to report the issue

ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the principles of client confidentiality are upheld and that Telehealth sessions are conducted professionally.

Policy

- Telehealth sessions must be conducted in a private area with a closed door, which is clean, clutter free and without visible private health information
- Persons not involved in the session must not be present during the session or be able to listen to the session
- During video consultations, practitioner video must be turned on at all times

Procedure

Prior to session commencing

- Find a private space with a door that can be closed, and ensure no one will enter the room during the session
- Ensure the surrounding area has no private health information visible and is clean and free of clutter
- Close the office door
- Mute notifications on the computer, including emails and chat messages
- Put your personal phone on silent
- Check your room lighting to ensure you are visible by the client- if possible, have a light source in front of you
- Keep your microphone on mute until the session has commenced- if concealing the sound of the session is an issue, the practitioner should consider wearing headphones to reduce the risk of a confidentiality breach

Commencing

- Check with the client that they are comfortable and that they can see you properly
- Check with the client that they are in a quiet, private space and can speak openly

Ending the session

- Ensure the client has left the session or call prior to hanging up or ending the video call

TECHNOLOGY SELECTION

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure clients receive a seamless experience when accessing Telehealth services, free of technology issues.

Policy

- If using a laptop, it must be placed on a surface which is stable and at an appropriate height- practitioners must maintain good ergonomics while conducting Telehealth sessions to prevent injury or fatigue
- Choose a Telehealth device with a screen size that allows you to clearly see the client and interact with the session without the video stream being unsteady

Procedure

To make a video call, practitioners must have the following:

- A computer or laptop, plugged into main power
- A webcam
- A microphone and speakers, or a USB connected headset
- Google Chrome web browser with Power Diary loaded
- A reasonable, reliable Internet connection

To make a phone call, practitioners must have the following:

- A deskphone or mobile phone (with sufficient battery)
- If using a mobile phone, good cellular coverage
- If using a personal phone ensure outgoing number is blocked

CONSENT

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that consent is collected from clients prior to Telehealth sessions, and to ensure all clients understand what Telehealth is, what their rights are and what to do if they no longer want to participate in Telehealth.

Policy

- Clients must have current consent forms on file prior to the Telehealth session commencing
- Verbal consent should be gained at the commencement of each session

Procedure

- At the time of booking the appointment, the client must be informed that the appointment will be via Telehealth
- The client must be sent a Telehealth Consent Form to be completed prior to the appointment
- If the client has not completed the form prior to the appointment, the clinician may gain verbal consent for the session to proceed

RECORDING

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the privacy of the client and clinician is maintained, and that standards for recording of sessions have been set.

Policy

[BusinessName] does not record Telehealth video consultations and does not permit clients to make their own separate recording of a Telehealth video consultation.

Where it is clinically relevant to record a Telehealth session, express consent- both written and verbal, must be gained in advance of the session.

Procedure

Sessions not being recorded

- At commencement of the session, advise the client that the session will not be recorded
- Remind the client that they are not permitted to record the session

Session to be recorded

- Provide the client with information about how the recording would be managed, stored and accessed
- Gain written consent prior to the session from the client and store this consent on the client's profile
- Gain verbal consent at commencement of the session from the client
- Store recordings securely in the client's Power Diary profile in accordance with usual requirements for retaining health records

TELEHEALTH CLIENT CONSENT FORM

What is the purpose of this form?

The purpose of this form is to provide information to you about Telehealth, and to obtain your consent to participate in a Telehealth consultation with your practitioner.

What is Telehealth?

Telehealth is the use of video or telecommunication services to clients. Typically, consultations are delivered via video, but can also be delivered via phone.

Will my privacy be protected?

This practice is subject to [INSERT LOCAL LAW/GUIDELINE] and must comply with obligations related to the collection, use and disclosure of personal information, including through telepractice. The practitioner must maintain confidentiality and privacy standards during sessions, and in creating, keeping and transmitting records.

At times, audio and video recordings of sessions may be taken to support the practitioner's work, as might occur in a face to face consultation. You will be informed before a recording takes place and can refuse to be recorded for any reason. The practitioner will inform you of the reason for the recording and how it will be stored.

The practitioner is obligated to meet standards to protect your privacy and security, including the use of secure, encrypted telehealth. However as with all online activities there is no guarantee of complete privacy and security protection. You may decrease the risk by using a private internet connection (i.e. not public wifi), ensuring your browser and security software is up-to-date, and by meeting with the practitioner from a private location.

- I agree to receive services via Telehealth
- I understand that I may agree or refuse any service or part of a service at any time. I can agree or refuse in writing or verbally

Client Name ______________________________

Client Signature ______________________________

Date ______________________________

TELEHEALTH CHECKLIST

Prior to session commencing

- ☐ Determine clinical appropriateness
- ☐ Check client consent is on file
- ☐ Ensure your surrounding area has no private health information visible and is clean and free of clutter
- ☐ Ensure your computer is connected to the internet- if on a laptop, ensure the laptop is plugged into power, or has sufficient charge for the duration of the session
- ☐ Close your office door
- ☐ Pre-test video equipment and connectivity

During the session

- ☐ Introduce yourself and confirm Telehealth consent.
- ☐ Confirm client name and best contact number- explain to the client if disconnected for any reason you will try to reconnect. If unsuccessful, you will call their phone.

Ending the session

- ☐ Recap the session and any follow-up actions
- ☐ Ensure the client has left the session prior to ending the call
- ☐ Make session notes including any technical issues experienced