



American Counseling Association & Social Work Ethical Standards for Telehealth Services

1. *H.2.a. Informed Consent and Disclosure* – Clients have the freedom to choose whether to use distance counseling, social media, and/or technology within the counseling process. In addition to the usual and customary protocol of informed consent between counselor and client for face-to-face counseling, the following issues, unique to the use of distance counseling, technology, and/or social media, are addressed in the informed consent process:
 - distance counseling credentials, physical location of practice, and contact information;
 - risks and benefits of engaging in the use of distance counseling, technology, and/or social media;
 - possibility of technology failure and alternate methods of service delivery;
 - anticipated response time;
 - emergency procedures to follow when the counselor is not available;
 - time zone differences;
 - cultural and/or language differences that may affect delivery of services: possible denial of insurance benefits; and
 - social media policy.
2. *H.2.b. Confidentiality Maintained by the Counselor* – Counselors acknowledge the limitations of maintaining the confidentiality of electronic records and transmissions. They inform clients that individuals might have authorized or unauthorized access to such records or transmissions (e.g., colleagues, supervisors, employees, information technologists).
3. *H.2.c. Acknowledgment of Limitations* – Counselors inform clients about the inherent limits of confidentiality when using technology. Counselors urge clients to be aware of authorized and/or unauthorized access to information disclosed using this medium in the counseling process.
4. *H.2.d. Security* – Counselors use current encryption standards within their websites and/or technology-based communications that meet applicable legal requirements. Counselors take reasonable precautions to ensure the confidentiality of information transmitted through any electronic means.
5. *H.3. Client Verification* – Counselors who engage in the use of distance counseling, technology, and/or social media to interact with clients take steps to verify the client’s identity at the beginning and throughout the therapeutic process. Verification can include, but is not limited to, using code words, numbers, graphics, or other nondescript identifiers.
6. *H.4.a Benefits and Limitations of Distance Counseling Relationships* – Counselors inform clients of the benefits and limitations of using technology applications in the provision of counseling services. Such technologies include, but are not limited to, computer hardware and/or software, telephones and applications, social media and Internet-based applications and other audio and/or video communication, or data storage devices or media.



7. *H.4.b. Professional Boundaries in Distance Counseling* – Counselors understand the necessity of maintaining a professional relationship with their clients. Counselors discuss and establish professional boundaries with clients regarding the appropriate use and/or application of technology and the limitations of its use within the counseling relationship (e.g., lack of confidentiality, times when not appropriate to use).
8. *H.4.c. Technology-Assisted Services* – When providing technology-assisted services, counselors make reasonable efforts to determine that clients are intellectually, emotionally, physically, linguistically, and functionally capable of using the application and that the application is appropriate for the needs of the client. Counselors verify that 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.
9. *H.4.d. Effectiveness of Services* – When distance counseling services are deemed ineffective by the counselor or client, counselors consider delivering services face-to-face. If the counselor is not able to provide face-to-face services (e.g., lives in another state), the counselor assists the client in identifying appropriate services.
10. *H.4.e. Access* – Counselors provide information to clients regarding reasonable access to pertinent applications when providing technology-assisted services.
11. *H.4.f. Communication Differences in Electronic Media* – Counselors consider the differences between face-to-face and electronic communication (nonverbal and verbal cues) and how these may affect the counseling process. Counselors educate clients on how to prevent and address potential misunderstandings arising from the lack of visual cues and voice intonations when communicating electronically.
12. *H.5.a. Records* – Counselors maintain electronic records in accordance with relevant laws and statutes. Counselors inform clients on how records are maintained electronically. This includes, but is not limited to, the type of encryption and security assigned to the records, and if/for how long archival storage of transaction records is maintained.
13. *H.5.b. Client Rights* – Counselors who offer distance counseling services and/or maintain a professional website provide electronic links to relevant licensure and professional certification boards to protect consumer and client rights and address ethical concerns.
14. *H.5.c. Electronic Links* – Counselors regularly ensure that electronic links are working and are professionally appropriate.



15. *H.5.d. Multicultural and Disability Considerations* – Counselors who maintain websites provide accessibility to persons with disabilities. They provide translation capabilities for clients who have a different primary language, when feasible. Counselors acknowledge the imperfect nature of such translations and accessibilities.
16. *H.6.a Virtual Professional Presence* – In cases where counselors wish to maintain a professional and personal presence for social media use, separate professional and personal web pages and profiles are created to clearly distinguish between the two kinds of virtual presence.
17. *H.6.b. Social Media as Part of Informed Consent* – Counselors clearly explain to their clients, as part of the informed consent procedure, the benefits, limitations, and boundaries of the use of social media.
18. *H.6.c. Client Virtual Presence* – Counselors respect the privacy of their clients’ presence on social media unless given consent to view such information.
19. *H.6.d. Use of Public Social Media* – Counselors take precautions to avoid disclosing confidential information through public social media.
20. *Higher Level of Care* – In cases where clients are having suicidal or homicidal thoughts, actively experiencing psychotic symptoms or experiencing a mental health crisis that cannot be resolved remotely, it may be determined that telehealth services are not appropriate and a higher level of care is required.

I have read the preceding information and understand my rights as a client.

Print Client’s Name: _____

Client’s Signature: _____ Date: _____