



Telemental Health Clinical Training

MFT Program Policy on Telemental Health Therapy Practice

In compliance with COAMFTE V12.5 Accreditation Standards, the MFT Program requires students who engage in telehealth therapy to do the following:

- Be registered in MFTH 7600 or Internship and under the supervision of an MFT Program faculty supervisor who is fully licensed and physically located in that state.
- Be familiar with and comply with all Georgia state requirements regarding teletherapy.
- Provide therapy to clients physically in the same state they are providing therapy.
- Attest to teletherapy Policy
- Attest to reading [Best Practices in the Online Practice of Couples and Family Therapy, AAMFT code of Ethics](#)
- Obtain 6 required CEs on Telemental Health

Telehealth Competency



3 CE requirement before admittance into the program for Telehealth



3 CE requirement obtained during the program for Telehealth (Today's Training)



Supervisor's CE requirement



Continued supervision regarding telemental health cases

Liability

- The liability insurance attained through AAMFT student membership (CPH) does include coverage for telehealth services.

Legal and Ethical Requirements



Confidentiality: Ensure that telemental health sessions are conducted in a private and secure environment, and appropriate use of technology and security measures to protect the confidentiality of clients' personal health information.



Informed Consent: Design a comprehensive telemental health informed consent from clients, which includes explanations of the risks and benefits of telemental health, the limitations of technology, and the potential for technical difficulties or interruptions. Additionally, we must ensure a means of delivering this document and getting the signed consent.



Client Emergencies: Establish clear procedures regarding client communication and client emergencies, ensuring a plan is in place to manage any emergencies or crises that may arise during a telemental health session.



Competency: Develop the necessary training and expertise to provide telemental health services effectively and ensure that all telemental health providers are familiar with the technology and equipment required for this service.



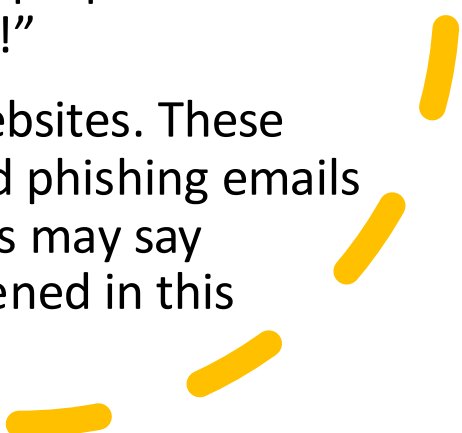
Documentation: Maintain accurate and thorough records of telemental health sessions.



Liability: All telemental health providers must have liability insurance in case of any legal action or complaints that may have arisen from telemental health services.

Reducing the Likelihood of Malware

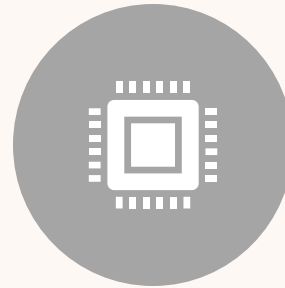
Avoid:

- Downloading bundled free software programs. Programs advertised as “free” often come with the cost of downloading malicious software to a computer.
 - Using file sharing, BitTorrent, and other peer-to-peer sharing services
 - Connecting removable media (e.g., USB chargers, thumb-drives, etc.) of unknown origin to computers. These devices can contain malware if they were previously connected to an infected computer.
 - Downloading scareware. Scareware is also known as rogueware and it is usually presented as Internet security software. These programs are advertised in pop-up windows that say things like “Your computer is infected!”
 - Clicking on unknown links in emails and on websites. These links often masquerade as advertisements and phishing emails that play on the reader’s emotions. These links may say something like “You won’t believe what happened in this video” or “These people need your help!”
- 

Confidentiality



Our business associate agreement with the Microsoft platform offers compliance with HIPAA



Even though Teams is an encrypted service and Microsoft has sought and received several security certifications, there is always a risk of a breach of confidentiality



Talking to clients about confidentiality and telemental health during the first session

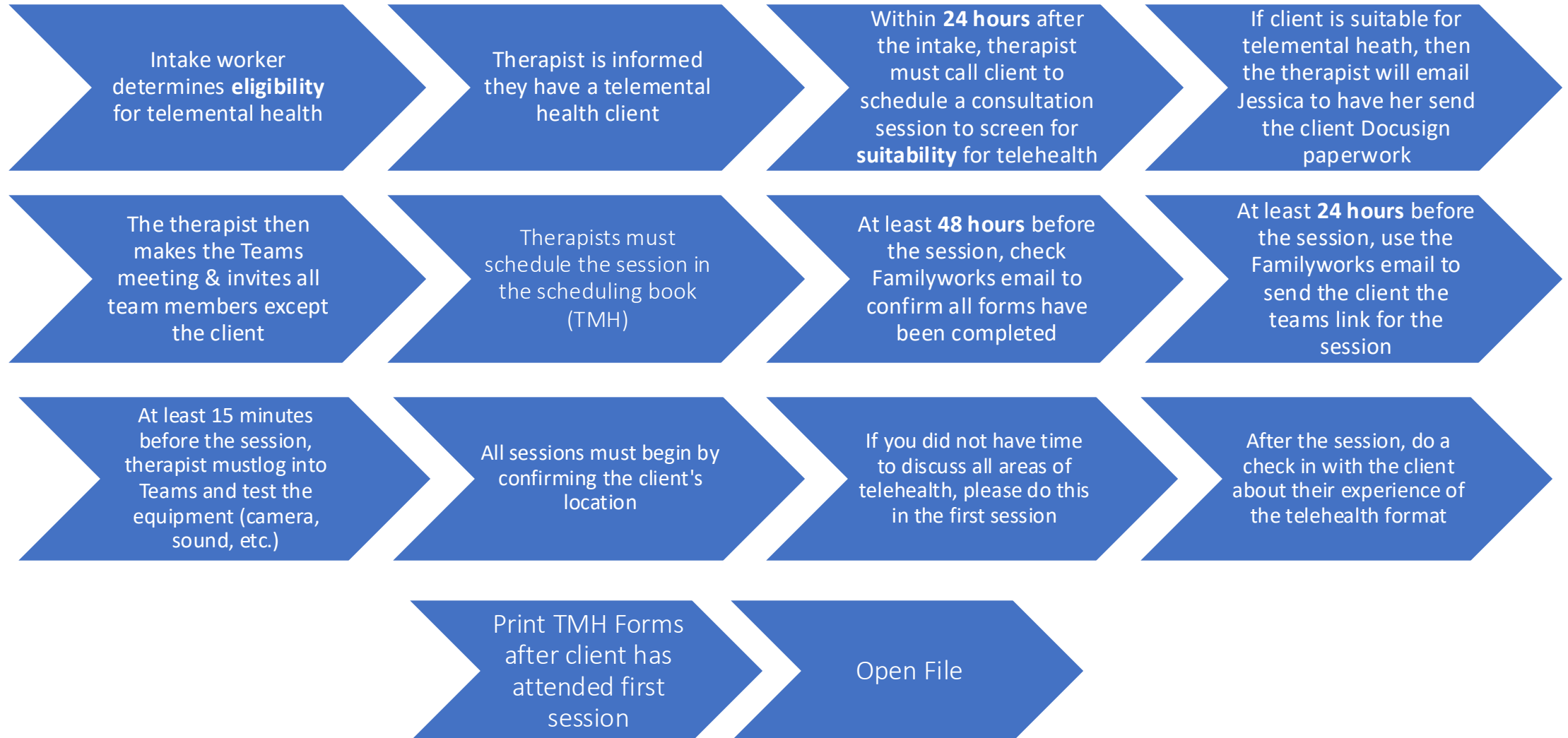


This will likely need to be an ongoing conversation with your clients

Requirements for Conducting Telemental health on a Personal Device (i.e., laptop computer, tablet/IPAD):

- Students are allowed to use their own laptops to conduct telemental health sessions within FamilyWorks clinic, but only when the following criteria have been met.
 - Students must have a secured internet connection when engaging in telemental health and accessing (no open WiFi is allowed). You are expected to use the VSU-WiFi network that you must login to via 2FA.
 - Students must only utilize VSU-recommended software. Read the recommendations & access virus protection here: <https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/it/solutions/personal-devices/recommended-technologies.php>
 - Students must take the utmost care and personal responsibility in their use of Teams and software on their personal device to protect client data and confidentiality (e.g., do NOT save login information, logging out when finished; only accessing the software in private spaces).
 - Students must only use Teams software on approved and secure devices, which includes laptops or iPad/tablet.
 - Do not disturb should be "turned on" for tablets.
 - No Cell Phones are allowed.
 - Note: You can check out a laptop at the media center!

Telemental Health Process



Eligibility for Tele-Therapy at FamilyWorks Clinic

Pre-Screening Conducted by the Intake Worker

What are your reasons for seeking telemental health vs in-person services?

- **One** of the following must be true :
 - Does not have access to transportation
 - Resides over 30 miles away
 - Issues of mobility such as (An individual recovering from a medical procedure or illness that limits travel)
 - Limited access to reliable childcare
 - Health concerns that make in-person visits difficult to travel or leave the house

If one of the following conditions were met, then ask...

- **All** the following must be true
 - Is 18 years or older
 - Is a current residence in GA
 - Has a webcam, headset or speakers, microphone and a reliable internet connection.
 - Can use a phone if you have this technology, i.e. Not a flip phone.
 - All telemental health session must include video.

Eligibility Screening (Intake)

Eligibility for Tele-Mental Health Services					
ONE of the following must be true:			ALL of the following must be true:		
Does not have access to transportation	Y	N	18 years old or older	Y	N
Resides over 30 miles away	Y	N	Current residence in GA	Y	N
Mobility issues (example: recovering for a medical procedure or illness that limits travel)	Y	N	Has required tech (headphones, microphone, video camera)	Y	N
Limited access to reliable childcare	Y	N	Reliable internet connection	Y	N
Health concerns that make in-person appointments difficult	Y	N	*Note: Clients can use a cellphone for sessions if it has the appropriate technology and connection*		

Consultation Session vs First Session

Call Client **24 hours after receiving intake** to schedule a consultation session

To be completed during Consultation Session:

- ✓ Confirm Email
- ✓ Complete Background Form
- ✓ Screen for Appropriateness for Telemental Health vs Face to Face:
 - ✓ Best Practices state: Client must be assessed for the appropriateness of receiving telemental health services vs face-to-face
- ✓ Review Paperwork
- ✓ Confirm Fee amount & Discuss electronic payment platform
- ✓ Therapist Availability and Contact Plan
- ✓ Review Telemental Health Expectations
- ✓ Review What to do if/when have technical difficulties
- ✓ Determine if the client is suitable or not suitable for telemental health services at FamilyWorks



Consultation Session

- Call client to schedule a consultation session
- Explain purpose of this session
- Explain Teams
- Will use Teams/Video
- Will need to send an encrypted link via FamilyWorks email
- Book a space via Scheduling book (TMH)
- Note: Specific instructions for how to do this will be covered later in the presentation

Consultation Session: Screening for Suitability

MFTs recognize that in some cases, online therapy is **not** the most appropriate treatment option. Prior to committing to the ongoing provision of online services, MFTs engaging in online practice must assess whether online services are appropriate to client needs.

- This includes:
 - consideration of the type and severity of symptoms
 - the nature of the treatment being sought
 - client access to adequate, secure, and confidential means of online communication with the therapist
 - client ability to effectively use the relevant technology

Possible Questions to Screen for Suitability

- Consideration of the type and severity of symptoms & nature of the treatment being sought
 - Questions:
 - *"Can you tell me more about the challenges or symptoms that brought you to therapy?"*
 - *"What are you hoping to work on in therapy?"*
 - *"Have you ever experienced thoughts of harming yourself or others?"*
 - *"Do you ever feel unsafe at home or in your current environment?"*
 - *"Have you been hospitalized or received emergency mental health services recently?"*
 - *"Have you had therapy before, and if so, was it online or in person? What worked or didn't work for you?"*
 - *"Do you feel that talking online would meet your needs, or do you think in-person support might feel more effective for you right now?"*

TMH Forms

Must obtain informed consent from your clients before providing telemental health services, which includes explaining the risks and benefits of telemental health, the limitations of technology, and the potential for technical difficulties or interruptions.

See our new telemental health forms here: [Teletherapy](#)

FamilyWorks Informed Consent to Teletherapy Services

Expectations for Telemental Services at FamilyWorks

Microsoft Teams Statement

Resources for Emergency and Non-Emergency needs

The Highlights

I understand that teletherapy cannot occur if I am outside the state of Georgia.

I understand my responsibility to ensure that I participate in all teletherapy sessions in a secure location.

I understand that if my psychotherapist believes I would be better served by another form of psychotherapeutic services (e.g. face-to-face services), I will be referred to a psychotherapist who can provide such services in my area.

I understand that the laws that protect the confidentiality of my medical and mental health information also apply to teletherapy.

I agree not to bring those who have not signed the Informed Consent into therapy sessions.

- I agree to call 911 or proceed to the nearest hospital emergency room if I am experiencing an emergency.

Risks:

- While the research results for individual therapy online are certainly promising, we could locate no studies that have directly examined the effectiveness of couple or family interventions in an online context compared to in-person treatment.
- Most email accounts are not secure, and even when the therapist is using a secure account, the client may not be. In addition, client email (even when accessed via secure account) may be accessed by other family members.

Informed Consent & Client Emergencies



FamilyWorks Clinic is not equipped as an emergency resource or crisis center, and we do not offer after-hours or on-call services.



Therapists should inform clients of limits to confidentiality which may apply in emergency or crisis situations.



Clients should be provided emergency contact information in the beginning of treatment, including telephone numbers they can use in the event of an emergency or crisis.

Emergency contact numbers & Resources will be sent via DocuSign w/informed consent documents



In telemental health, the therapist will, also establish the name and information of an emergency contact person or “ECP” who could physically help to intervene in the event the client was in crisis.



Informed Consent & Client Emergencies

“In case of an emergency where you are at imminent risk of hurting yourself or someone else, we will contact your ECP. This would usually be a friend or family member close to you who you trust could support you if you need help. I would only contact your emergency contact person when you needed immediate help. Who would you like to list as your emergency contact person?”

Clients agree not to use email to communicate with therapists or FamilyWorks about urgent concerns or crises.
"FamilyWorks email is not monitored, clients should always rely first on local emergency and crisis resources discussed with the therapist, and when in imminent danger of harm, should not wait for their therapist or FamilyWorks to return contact to them."

Therapist Availability and Contact Plan

- MFTs engaging in online practice inform clients of their availability for additional communication between scheduled sessions, and for crisis intervention.
 - They inform clients of the best means of between-session communications (phone, email, text messaging, etc.)
 - FamilyWorks Phone ONLY
 - Typical response time for such communications
 - 24 hours (M-F) , if you call on a Friday, will not be able to return your call till Monday
 - MFTs inform clients of typical office days and hours, and of times when the therapist is not expected to be available
 - Explain being a therapist trainee
- They inform clients of the best way to notify the MFT that the client is in a crisis situation.
 - FamilyWorks does not provide emergency services or session. If you are experiencing an emergency, you will need to call 911 or proceed to the nearest hospital emergency room if I am experiencing an emergency. Please refer to the resource form sent to you via docusign.

Screening for Eligibility & Technology

- **Client Access to Technology**

Purpose: To gauge the client's access to adequate, secure, and confidential means of online communication with therapist.

- Questions:

- "Do you have a private space where you can talk freely without being overheard?"
 - "What device will you be using for sessions, and is it one that only you have access to?"
 - "Do you have a stable internet connection for video sessions?"

- **Client Ability to Use the Relevant Technology**

Purpose: To gauge the client's comfort and capability with online tools.

- Questions:

- "Have you used Zoom or other video platforms before?"
 - "Do you feel comfortable turning on your camera and audio during sessions?"
 - "Would you like me to walk you through how to join a session or troubleshoot issues?"
 - "Do you have any concerns about using technology for therapy?"

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

Assisting Clients to use Telemental Health Platform Effectively

- Clients may need coaching from the practitioner regarding how to create boundaries in their home to establish privacy for their tele-session
 - Brainstorm with your client possible ways to establish privacy for their meetings
 - Solutions may include...
 - sitting alone in a (non-moving) car
 - sitting outside on a porch or in a yard
 - sitting in the bathroom
 - Encourage your client's creative thinking to identify solutions to the lack of privacy
- 
- A series of four yellow curved dashes in the bottom right corner, arranged in a diagonal line.

The Decision

After reviewing all the materials, hearing the client's response to the background form, and considering the type and severity of symptoms as well as the nature of the treatment being sought you will need to determine if the client, given their current condition is suitable for teletherapy.

- **If the client is deemed appropriate for telemental health:**
 - Proceed with the next steps in the intake process (e.g., schedule the first session, complete consent forms, etc.).
- **If you are uncertain about the client's suitability:**
 - Consult with your **supervisor** before making a final determination.
 - Inform the client that you will contact them once a decision has been made about whether FamilyWorks can provide telemental health services at this time.
- **If the client is found *not* to be suitable for telemental health services:**
 - "Right now, we don't have the resources in place to assist with the technological aspects needed to ensure online therapy would be effective for you."

Before you END the Consultation Session!

- **Determine if they are suitable for telemental Health services at FamilyWorks**
- **Schedule your first session**
- **Confirm client's email**
- **Explain that they will be receiving the TMH Forms via docusign from Jessica Millican via their email.**
 - Prior to your first telemental health session you will receive informed consent, teams' agreement, expectations for telemental health at FamilyWorks, and a resource list via doc-u-sign. This is an online platform which allows one to easily sign online documents. These forms must be completed and received prior to attending your first telemental health session.
 - Please complete these at least 24 hours prior to our first session (provide the day/date)
- **Receive a Teams link for the session via FamilyWorks email**
 - How to use Teams
 - No need to download anything
 - Receive the link; Select "join", "continue in browser", "select allow", "enter your name", and then hit "Join Now"
- **Emails that we send from FamilyWorks will be encrypted**
- **Remind them that the FamilyWorks email is ONLY for scheduling and that no one monitors this system.**
- **Encourage the client join 10 minutes prior to the session to check their camera, audio, etc. and if they have any problems to call FamilyWorks at (229)-219-1281.**

Not Documented...Did NOT Happen!

To ensure that all clients are appropriately screened for telemental health (TMH) services and that the suitability of online therapy is documented in accordance with FamilyWorks policy and ethical best practices.

- Use the **FamilyWorks Telemental Health Screening form** to complete and document this screening.
 - The screening should evaluate the client's symptoms, clinical needs, access to technology, safety considerations, and capacity to engage effectively in an online format.
 - Link to form
- **If the client is deemed appropriate for telemental health:**
 - Document this determination on the screening form.
 - Proceed with the next steps in the intake process (e.g., schedule the first session, complete consent forms, etc.).
- **If the client is found *not* to be suitable for telemental health services:**
 - Provide a clear **rationale** for this determination on the screening form.
 - Offer the client **at least three referral options** in their local area for in-person services & send via FamilyWorks email.

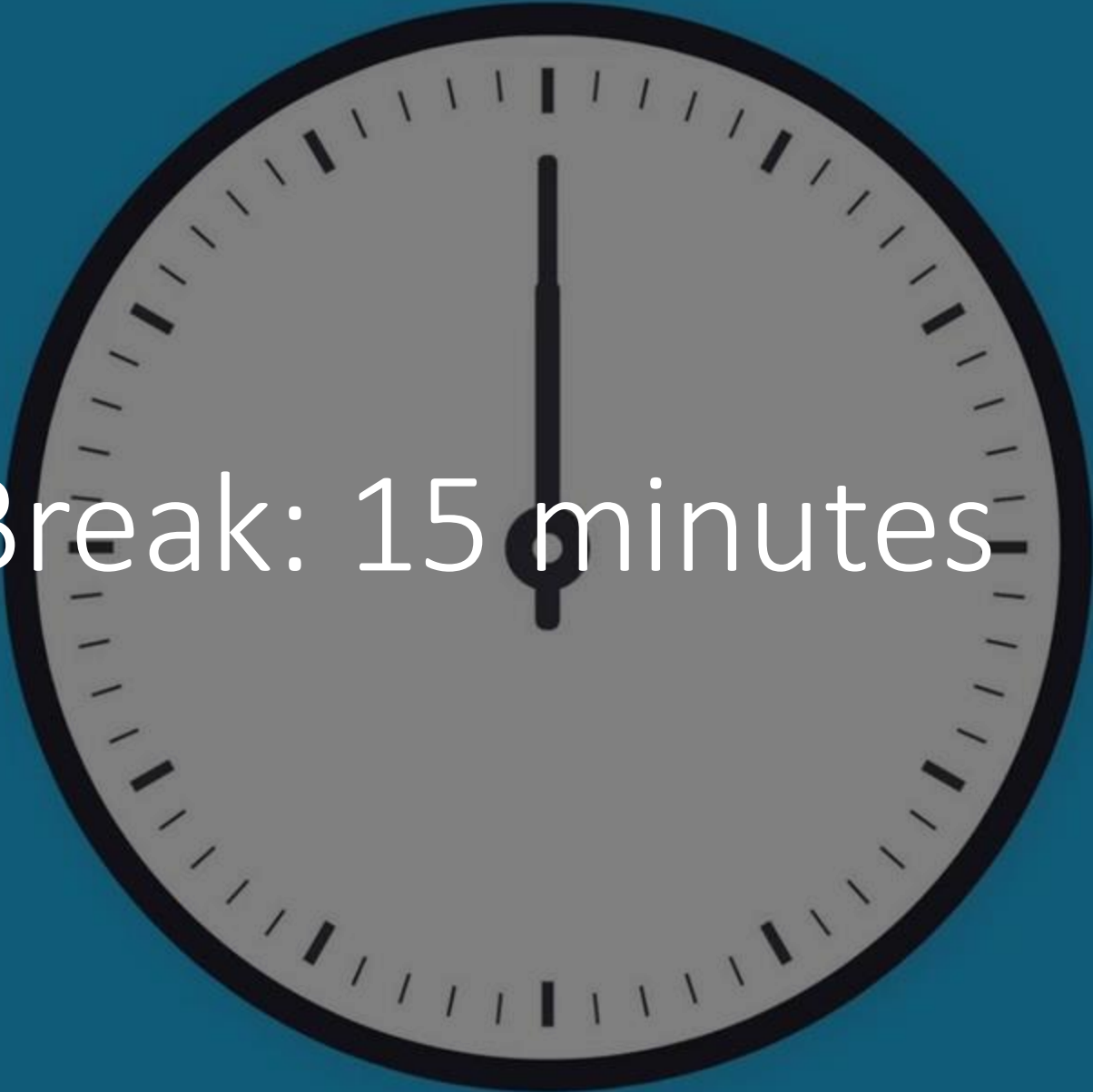


Practice – 30 Minutes

Groups of 2 will be randomly sent to teams' room to practice your consultation session!

Use the screening form as part of your conversation.
Focus on walking through each of the areas that are required to be completed in this session

Afterward, be ready to share what worked well, what was challenging, and what you learned from the experience.

A circular clock face with a black border and a light gray interior. The clock has tick marks for minutes and hours. A single vertical black line points to the 12 o'clock position. The text "Break: 15 minutes" is overlaid in white.

Break: 15 minutes



Thoughts



Next Steps....

- Complete Screening & Background form
 - Please place this in the practicum drawer, in the folder where intakes are stored
- Schedule the client in the FamilyWorks scheduling book (TMH)
- Email Jessica to send TMH forms to client
 - Include clients name (first and last name) and the email address (encrypt the email)
- Create a Teams meeting link
- At least 48 hours confirm forms have been signed by checking FamilyWorks email
 - Reminder: Session cannot occur until these forms have been signed
- At least 24 hours before session, send client link via FamilyWorks email encrypted
- Start Session early to check technology is working

Scheduling in Teams

- Open your Microsoft Teams app or website and navigate to the calendar.
- Select +New event at the top left.
- Select the "Schedule a meeting" option.
- In the scheduling window that appears, fill in the details of the meeting, such as the title, date, time, and duration.
- For the client, you will have to go to your Teams calendar after you've scheduled the meeting and copy the link.
- Email the link to the client through the FamilyWorks email address and encrypt the email.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Teams scheduling interface. At the top, there are icons for Teams and Calendar, and a 'New event' button. Below these is a 'Send' button and a dropdown menu showing 'Calendar (jjshute@valdosta.edu)'. The main section is titled 'Example Initials Session' with a toggle switch for 'Teams meeting'. Below the title is a field for 'Emma Wulff' with an 'Optional' label. The date and time are set to '10/17/2025' from '11:00 AM' to '12:00 PM'. At the bottom, there are 'Join' buttons with dropdown menus. One dropdown menu is open, showing options to 'Join Teams meeting' and 'Copy join link'.

Teams

Calendar

New event

Send

Calendar (jjshute@valdosta.edu)

Example Initials Session

Teams meeting

Emma Wulff

Optional

10/17/2025 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

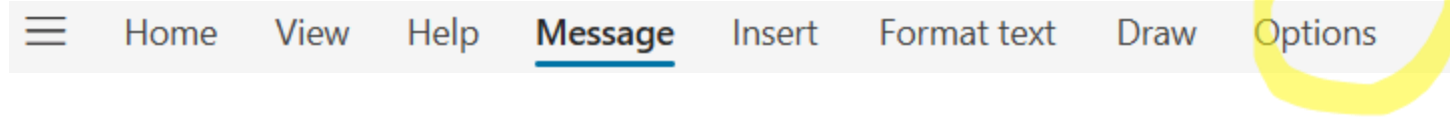
Join

Join Teams meeting

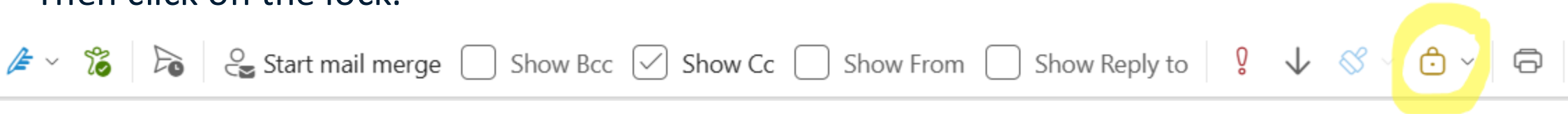
Copy join link

Sending an Email Encrypted in Outlook

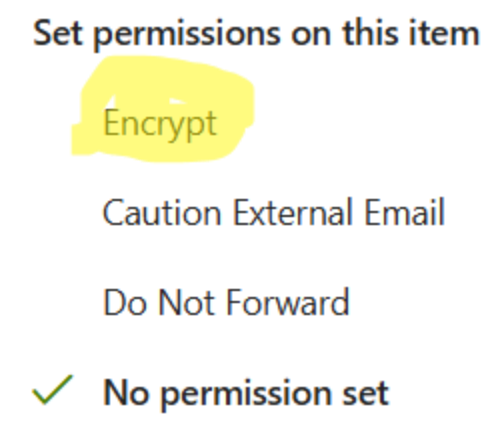
- Compose a new message, go to the **Options** tab.



- Then click on the lock.



- Next a window will open choose Encrypt.



- After selecting the option, compose and send your email as you normally would.

First Session

Before you start the therapy session

- The therapist must obtain verbal consent of conducting a tele-health therapy session
 - "I authorize and voluntarily consent to participation and treatment of myself in tele-health services at FamilyWorks"
 - Client needs to verbal agree "Yes, I agree"
- Confirm location (address)
- Confirm the client is in a secure location
 - If therapy is not in a private space, then therapy cannot commence
- Confirm ECP, name, and phone number
 - See background form

Safety Planning

- MFTs engaging in online practice prepare a crisis management plan with every client as soon as possible.
- This plan includes resources local to the client, such as local crisis lines, hospitals, or other emergency services, as appropriate.
 - Emergency referrals
- MFTs engaging in online practice coordinate care with local crisis resources as appropriate when a client engages those resources. This ensures adequate continuity of care between providers.
 - Discuss 988 resource
- MFTs engaging in online practice reassess the appropriateness of the client for online services as soon as practicable following a client crisis.
 - Documentation of the reassessment is necessary

Addressing Suicidality/Homicidality Risk with Telemental Health Clients

If a client is at high risk of harm to themselves or others, the therapist should contact supervisor(s) immediately.



In consultation with a supervisor, the therapist will assess the client's risk for suicidality/homicidality and develop a plan to ensure the safety of the client and/or others.

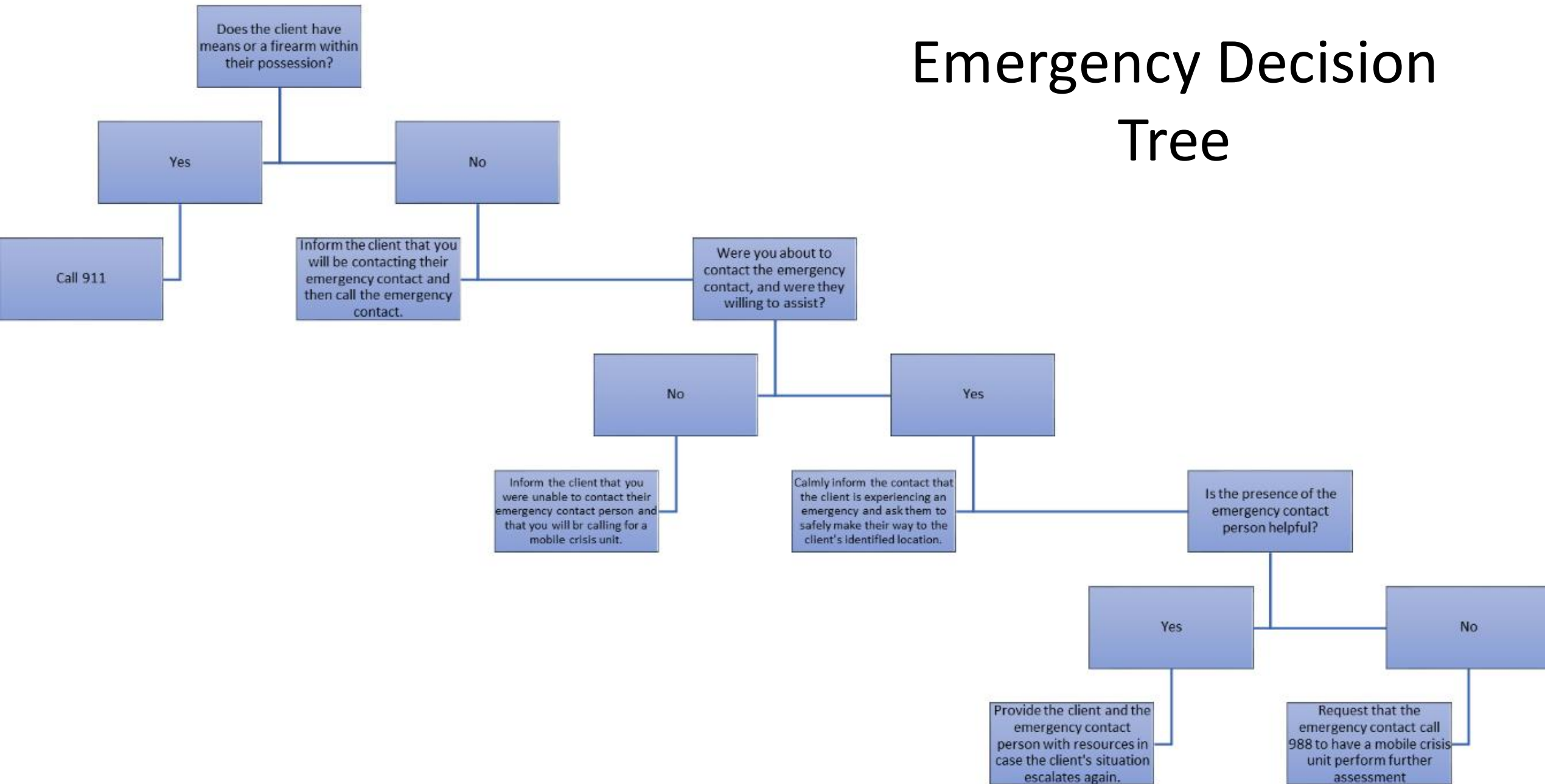


If a client is consistently at risk and is deemed outside of the scope of practice of FamilyWorks therapists

- Consult your supervisor
 - Provide referrals within the client's location
- 

If a client is often at risk/has been at risk in the past, but is stable and FamilyWorks remains able to meet their needs, the therapist conducting telemental health must take steps to anticipate client emergencies/needs*

Emergency Decision Tree



Before you End the First Session

Collect Payment using the online payment platform



Check in with your client about **how the telemental health platform is working** for them



Encourage them to **share with you if they are having difficulty** using the telemental health platform



For example, clients maybe be **distracted by seeing themselves** on camera

Creating the File



THE TELEMENTAL HEALTH FORMS: SHOULD BE
PRINTED AFTER THE FIRST SESSION



CREATE THE FILE AND PLACE ALL RELEVANT
FORMS INSIDE THE FILE



THE SCREENING FORM SHOULD BE PLACED ON
THE LEFT SIDE OF THE FILE AND BE AT THE VERY
BOTTOM UNDER THE INFORMED CONSENT

Documentation & Telemental Health Sessions

Use the hardcopy FamilyWorks case note

First Session Documentation:

- The therapist must obtain verbal consent of conducting a tele-health therapy session & document in the first session case note
 - "I authorize and voluntarily consent to participation and treatment of myself or child in tele-health services at FamilyWorks"
 - Client needs to verbal agree "Yes, I agree"

Documenting on the Fee and Contact Sheet:

- You will note TMH on each entry in the fee and contact sheet (ex: *TMH Individual Session, 1 hour*).

Documentation Each Tele-Health Case Note:

- Location changes to **TMH**

Documentation & Telemental Health Sessions

Use the hardcopy FamilyWorks case note

In **Each** tele-health session, the therapist must ask the client their location. The location needs to match what is listed in the informed consent.

- "For our records can you please state your location (address)"
- The location needs to be documented in each case note.
- If the location is different this needs to be noted in the case note. If they are not in the state of Georgia, then therapy cannot commence.
- If therapy is not in a private space, then therapy cannot commence.
- If the client is consistently not at the location indicated on the informed consent, then a new informed consent must be completed with the new location listed.



Last Reminder

Remind clients that although they are in a more comfortable setting, this is still a clinical appointment, and the focus of your contact will continue to be their treatment goals. This sets the boundary that this is not a friendship but a professional relationship.

Telemental Health & Technical Difficulties

Even if both parties have a reliable internet connection and it has worked well in the past. There may still be glitches with a stable internet connection – whether it's a screen freezing or a lag in sound.

These issues can be very frustrating on both ends, which means it's crucial to discuss this with your client before, so they do not feel overwhelmed or frustrated.

While most of the time, your video platform might work very well, always talk with your clients about what to do if a possible disruption does arise and work out a back-up plan with clients in case you do experience technical difficulties.

Do the Following...

- Provide the FamilyWorks phone number so they can call if problem arise
- Use the chat function to share information if the audio is not working
- Log off and log back on
- Stop the session (after 15 minutes)
- Re-scheduling the session
- If stopping the session would be inappropriate, then you could use audio only or call them from the FamilyWorks phone.
 - This should be a last resort and be clear with the client that this is a one-time option.
- If technical problems occur often, discuss with client that telemental health may not be an option.

- Each therapist can only have 2 TMH clients at this time
- Each therapist should track their TMH clients on their caseload form & client tracking form
- Current clients who would like to move to TMH
 - Make sure they meet the minimum eligibility requirements
 - Get permission from a supervisor to switch from F2F to TMH
 - Need to do a consultation session
 - Send forms docusign
 - Complete a screening form
 - Review policies & paperwork
 - Ensure they are suitable with technology and these requirements
 - Background form (depends)

Current Policy





Questions

Next Steps....

Review the Best Practices Article (Slide 1 & in teletherapy forms folder)



Sign the Teletherapy Policy Attestation (docusign) by October 27th



Receive your Telemental Health Certificate



Qualified to conduct teletherapy at FamilyWorks



Telehealth Starts on Nov 1