

MFT Program Policy on Teletherapy Practice

Policy Availability

The **Policy on Teletherapy Practice** is available to the public via the [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook](#).

Teletherapy Definition

As defined by Standards V12.5, ***“teletherapy is the process of delivering synchronous therapeutic services using a secure video platform according to relevant state, federal, and provincial regulatory requirements or guidelines. The online therapeutic interaction is consistent with state or provincial regulations for the location in which the clinical student therapist and participant(s) are physically located.”***

As defined by Standards V12.5, ***“virtual supervision is the process of delivering synchronous MFT relational/systemic supervision using a secure video platform. The online supervisory interaction is compliant with relevant state, federal, and provincial regulations for the location in which the clinical student therapist and supervisor are physically located.”***

Guidelines for Telemental Health Practice and Training

This policy outlines the standards and procedures for MFT students engaging in teletherapy. All teletherapy/telehealth policy and practice at the Valdosta State University MFT Program must be in accordance with relevant state regulatory requirements—Georgia law ([Georgia Code § 43-10A-7](#)) and Georgia [Rule 135-11.01](#), the telehealth practice rule—the two lawful sources guiding telemental health practices, as well as best practices recommended by the [Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards \(AMFTRB\)](#).

The MFT Program will provide an additional workshop training before the student begins his/her/their clinical work.

In compliance with COAMFTE V12.5 Accreditation Standards, the MFT Program requires all students in the program to comply with the following:

1. Only provide therapy to clients who are physically located in Georgia at the time of each session.
2. All new, incoming students must obtain three continuing education hours in online, tele-mental health training. New students are encouraged to get these CEUs prior to beginning the program: The deadline for completion of the requirement is September 5 of the student's first semester in the Program. Once completed, proof of the online training (certificate of attendance) shall be emailed to the Clinical Coordinator and copied to the Program Director.
3. Comply with [Rule 135-11.01](#), the Georgia telehealth practice rule, and Georgia state requirements regarding [TeleMental Health practice](#).

This policy addresses Standards V12.5. Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications and Standard III: Curriculum, KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

Note: Georgia state rules, laws, or regulations supersede conflicting MFT policy statements and requirements.

4. Download/read AAMFT's Best Practices in the Online Practice of Couple and Family Therapy (see Telehealth Training Folder)
5. Be registered in MFTH 7600 Practicum or Internship and under the supervision of an MFT Program faculty supervisor, all of whom are fully licensed and physically located in Georgia.

Students who engage in telehealth therapy must ensure the following:

- Students must complete teletherapy/telehealth training prior to conducting virtual sessions
 - Telehealth training should include knowledge of such issues as emerging legal and ethical requirements, documentation, response to crises, awareness of therapeutic space, joining, appropriate individual and systemic interventions (e.g., couples, play therapy), or other topics of relevance to conducting ethical, legal, safe, and helpful virtual therapy with diverse populations.
- The student's supervisor must be a AAMFT Approved Supervisor or Supervisor in Training
- All telemental health therapy will be conducted synchronously.
- All faculty-student supervision will be conducted in person.
- Students doing telehealth therapy should familiarize themselves with [Standard VI, Technology Assisted Professional Services of the AMFT Code of Ethics](#), and download/read AAMFT's Best Practices in the Online Practice of Couple and Family Therapy (see Telehealth Training Folder)
- Complete required documentation that informs the program that they will be participating in teletherapy and that attests to having completed the above readings.

It is MFT Program policy that while a student in the MFT Program, clinically active students. . .

1. cannot take more than 2 telehealth clients at any one time
2. must see telehealth clients from FamilyWorks only (which has HIPAA compliant technology)
3. must see only clients who are unable to come to the clinic (for reasons of disability, distance, or lack of transportation, etc.)
4. FamilyWorks will run a telehealth waiting list if all students have two virtual clients, while clients requesting/requiring telehealth services remain.

Responding to a Crisis Client in Teletherapy

Prior to engaging in teletherapy, each client has been screened for suitability, which includes type and severity of symptoms. If a client is deemed too risky for teletherapy, they are denied teletherapy services at FamilyWorks and provided with a list of referrals if they cannot physically come to FamilyWorks. However, sometimes clients face crises that may occur as the therapeutic process develops. Therapists have been trained with an emergency decision tree to provide guidance in such situations (see Clinical Coordinator and teletherapy training power point).

Also, each client prior to the first session the therapist must:

- Provide a list of national emergency referrals
- Discuss 988 resource
- Have an emergency contact person contact information

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Prior to each session the therapist must:

- Confirm location (address)
- Confirm Emergency Contact Person, name, and phone number

If a therapist has any crisis concerns about a client, they should do the following:

1. If a client is at high risk of harm to themselves or others, the therapist should contact his/her/their supervisor(s) immediately.
2. 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.
3. If a client is consistently at risk and is deemed outside of the scope of practice of FamilyWorks therapists
 - a. Consult your supervisor
 - b. Provide referrals within the client's location
4. 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*