

Dear Client,

I want to first start by saying that I am far from an alarmist. I take a moderate view to most things I encounter and I am not a fan of feeding anxiety or panic. Having said that, facts are facts. What little we know now about the Covid-19 virus is that a person can be symptom free but a carrier of the virus for 2-15 days before showing symptoms. We also know that this is a particularly easy virus to catch because it is transmitted via airborne particles. So merely disinfecting surfaces will not fully protect you and your loved ones. The advice that medical professionals are offering to us all is that it is imperative to stop the spread and the only way to prevent the spread of this virus and overwhelming our healthcare system, is to limit face to face contact as much as possible.

Given all this and the fact that I care very deeply about your health and wellness, I am suspending all in office sessions until such time that it seems medically safe to resume face to face contact. I will be reassessing this on a weekly basis and giving you all as much notice as possible of any changes.

Prior to this health crisis, I had been taking classes and learning more about online sessions that the industry calls "telemental health" which I will refer to throughout this document as (TMH). I was taking this step as a way to continue providing you safe, secure services in the event of extreme weather conditions. So the following page has my TMH policies for you to review, sign and send back to me before we start using TMH on a regular basis.

There is a wide range of feelings about the use of computers for therapy sessions. I am open to hearing any of your concerns or otherwise around this change and I urge you to contact me as soon as questions arise.

TMH will effect you all in different ways. I anticipate this impacting my youngest clients the most. My therapy with children relies heavily on developing our relationship through play and helping a child express their internal conflicts and experiencing corrective experiences through this play. With my youngest of clients, anyone under the age of 12, this kind of relationship **may** be difficult with TMH. For those of you who are parents of my young clients, I will be contacting you to discuss what will be best for your child. We may decide together to switch to a mix of parent support sessions with video check-ins with your child until such time that I can resume my in-person work with your child.

Please note that although I will work to prevent this from happening, opting out of online services may result in a loss of your therapy time and day. As much as I love what I do and feel very passionately about it, it is also the way I make my living. Given this, it may not be possible for me to hold a spot open for you as we can not predict how long this current crisis will persist.

I want each of you to decide for yourselves how you would like to proceed. It is my hope, that for those of you who can find a safe environment in which to use TMH (see my policies on next page) that you will give it a try and we can talk about how it feels for you.

Please sign and return both pages of this policy to me by either emailing signed copy or taking a photo of signed copy and sending it to me via email to AnnieHotchkiss@therapysecure.com

Best Regards,
Annie Hotchkiss, LICSW
3/13/2020

Policy for the delivery of Telemental Health Services (TMH) for Annie Hotchkiss, LICSW.

Developed: 1/1/2020, revised 3/13/2020

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the steps needed from both therapist and client to ensure safe and secure use of TMH.

It will be your decision to opt in or out of the use of TMH. Opting in doesn't commit you to it in the future. Just like in-person sessions, you can opt out at anytime. The only caveat is that you give me the normal required notice to cancel your appointment as you do with in-person sessions.

First, please call your primary insurance company and ask to speak to someone from their behavioral health department and ask to speak to someone about your telemental health coverage. I have a general understanding of most plans, but even within the same insurance company, different plans may have different rules regarding TMH.

When talking to your insurance company please make sure to be clear that you want to know the answers to the following questions:

1. Do you have telemental health coverage?
2. Does your coverage allow you continue to see your current therapist who uses her own HIPPA compliant platform? (some plans only allow you to use Teledoc or some other platform that I am not on.)
3. Is there anything special your therapist needs to do with coding or filing out forms in order to be reimbursed for this service? If so, please get me a name and number of whom I can call to get details.
4. Even after you have called and verified, please note that if they decide not to cover the service, just like with in-person sessions, you will still be held liable for the cost of the session.

I will be using the HIPPA compliant platform called doxy.me. If I find issues with this platform, I will notify you of any changes and any important details that come with that change.

With this platform, you will need:

1. A laptop, computer or tablet with camera and speaker. Smart phones can be used but are not ideal and should only be used if you have no other option.)
2. A private space in either your home, place of employment, or vehicle. Your privacy is very important to me but I can not secure your location so it will be your responsibility to find a space that is safe and private. Some things for you to think about is who is home or around during your session and using a sound machine or radio played outside the door of the room you select as most doors are not sound proof.
3. If at all possible, try to be as close to your modem or plugged into your modem to get the best quality picture as wifi connections may cause lots of buffering or frozen pictures.
4. On the morning of your appointment, I will send an email to you from my HIPPA secure email from AnnieHotchkiss@therapysecure.com with a link to my virtual waiting room. I would like you to wait until 2-5 minutes before your appointment to click on this link. At your assigned appointment time, I will start the video session with you.
5. When you click on the link, the only information that you should be asked for is your name. You can give only your first name and initial. (If you are using a cell-phone, some phones ask if they can record the session. This is a function of your phone and not my program or doxy.me).

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- 6. doxy.me will never record any of your session, this is one of the reasons I chose this platform for our sessions. So if your device or phone demand that you select yes, for a recording, that is a function of your device and the recording is only stored on your device and for your security and privacy, I would suggest you deleting that recording if your device creates one.

Session Failure:

There are many reasons a video call may not go well. If we are not having a good electronic connection I will do my best to improve that. However, if we accidentally loose signal or the session, **I will want you to call me immediately so that we can discuss what we can do next. I ask that you call me rather than my calling you as I will not be privy to all the devices and phone numbers you will have access to for communication.**

At the beginning of every session, I am going to want you to give me your location. This is for your safety. When we are in session and you have an emergency, I need to know your location. During a video session, if you have a medical or other emergency, knowing your exact location could be critical to getting the care to you as quickly as possible.

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I have read and understand Annie Hotchkiss’s TMH policies and understand my responsibilities for such sessions. I need you to sign even if you are opting out:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of client**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signed name of client or guardian**

Circle if you are opting in or out of this service.

**Opting In**

**Opting Out**

If you are **OPTING OUT**, please initial at the end of this sentence showing you understand you may loose your session time and day. \_\_\_\_\_

If you **OPTING IN**, Please remember you will be liable for any charges not covered by your insurance company. Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

I need the following information:

Print clearly email address or addresses that you would like the session link to be sent to the morning of your session:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed email**