

NEW HORIZONS COUNSELING, LLC

4578 William Penn Highway, Murrysville, PA 15668 (724) 972-6409

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TELEHEALTH PATIENT INFORMED CONSENT

PATIENT NAME: _____ OTHERS ATTENDING: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ INSURANCE NAME/ID# _____

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this form is to obtain your consent to participate in a telemedicine counseling session in connection with the following procedure and/or service **outpatient mental health.**

2. **NATURE OF THE TELEHEALTH CONSULT: TELEHEALTH** Variously dubbed telebehavioral health, telemedicine, teletherapy, distance therapy, e-therapy, internet therapy, or online therapy, “telehealth” is defined as the use of electronic transmission to provide interactive real-time mental health services remotely, including consultation, assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, counseling, psychotherapy, coaching, guidance, psycho-education, education and transfer of medical information with an experienced therapist. This can include both video and audio forms of communication, via the internet or telephone. **Telehealth services do not include texting or e-mail.**

3. **OFFICE AGREEMENTS:** Telehealth is governed by all the same ethics and laws that cover in-person, in-office psychotherapy. Consequently, all other policies, consents and agreements signed with your therapist apply to telehealth services as well. This document is an addendum to all in-office service agreements and does not substitute for any such agreements.

4. **ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES:** The main advantage of telehealth is that it provides flexibility for continuity of care when in-person sessions cannot be conducted. Telehealth by videoconference allows for both verbal and non-verbal communication in a way that is similar but not identical to in-person communication. **Telehealth is not a universal substitute, nor the same as in-person psychological service.** There can be disruptions, distortions, interruptions by unauthorized persons. Some report that telehealth services do not provide the same level of ease, comfort and connection, and may not seem as “complete” when discussing personal and private matters. Body language isn’t as fully visible. Misunderstandings may occur more easily. These differences may impact the quality of the professional therapeutic relationship. Just as with in-person psychotherapy, the effectiveness of telehealth services cannot be guaranteed. Discuss any concerns as they arise.

5. **PREREQUISITES:** **Telehealth may work best when face-to-face sessions occur at the beginning of a therapeutic relationship.** Telehealth also requires some reasonable comfort with technology. Telehealth is best for augmenting in-person services when a client is unable to come to the office location due to temporary limitations, such as medical conditions limiting physical mobility, distance due to travel, and scheduling conflicts, etc. **To provide optimal care, ideally in-person sessions are recommended.** Under certain extreme circumstances when telehealth should not be provided due to the nature of therapeutic services needed, your therapist may recommend: coming into the office, waiting until you can come into the office, or referring you to a therapist who can provide such services in-person. With the COVID-19 pandemic, receiving in-person therapy services from anyone may become very challenging if not impossible to accomplish without hospitalization. Professional services are being provided under a license issued by and limited to practice within the state of Pennsylvania. Therefore, the client signing below affirms that s/he resides in the state of Pennsylvania at the time of telehealth services and is not suicidal or at risk for suicide, even unintentionally, as for example, due to current drug/alcohol abuse not reported to your therapist.

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6. **EMERGENCIES:** Telehealth is not recommended for any psychological emergency. This type of therapy is not suitable for someone who is suicidal or feeling unsafe to self or others. If your therapist believes you would be better served with in-person therapy and your therapist is unable to provide that, you will be referred to a therapist in your area who can provide such services. (Note: Again, this may not be possible, despite being needed, given the current COVID-19 pandemic and limited options for in-person work, unless you are hospitalized.) Just as with in-person services, if an emergency should occur during a telehealth session, your therapist will take necessary steps to ensure your safety and that of others. **If you are feeling unsafe to self or others, you may Dial 911, Go to the Emergency room, Contact Crisis Hotline - Westmoreland (800-836-6010) and Allegheny Co. (888-796-8226). There is a Walk in Crisis Center at Westmoreland Regional Hospital.**

7. **SCHEDULING:** Telehealth sessions are scheduled ahead of time at regular times. These appointments reserve time specifically for you. Just as with in-person appointments, you are responsible for keeping and paying for all telehealth appointments. We will start and end on time. In all telehealth sessions, the therapist will initiate the telehealth session, unless other arrangements are made in advance. A window of 15 minutes will remain open after the start time of your session. **Just as with an in-person session, if your therapist doesn't hear from you or can't get through to you, please call her by phone if you are having difficulty. Cancellations and missed appointments are handled in the same way as in-person cancellations are handled in other forms.** The therapist cannot be responsible for the client's ability to participate in sessions, including technological difficulties or disruptions.

8. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** The same laws protecting the confidentiality of your medical information in the office apply to telehealth sessions, including mandatory reporting and permitted exceptions, such as child, elder and dependent adult abuse reporting, risks to the client's wellbeing, threats of violence to an identifiable victim and when clients enter their own emotional or mental factors into a legal proceeding. The client and therapist both agree to keep the same privacy safeguards used during in-person sessions. **Ensure that your environment is free from unexpected or unauthorized intrusions or disruptions to our communication. You are asked to preserve privacy and limit the risk of being overheard by a third party by conducting the session in a private room with closed doors, with reasonable sound barriers, and no one else present or observing.** Earphones/earbuds may be very helpful to help you preserve privacy as well. The client and therapist both agree to not record the telehealth sessions without prior written consent.

9. **CONSENT:** You have the right to opt in or opt out of telehealth communication at any time, without affecting your right to future care or treatment, except during the COVID 19 pandemic when in-person sessions will not be available for a period of time. Please discuss this thoroughly with your therapist. Your signature below indicates that you understand that you are responsible for learning to handle the specific medium used, prior to your telehealth sessions, and to engage in any necessary rehearsals to ensure effectiveness.

10. **SECURITY:** No electronic transmission system is considered completely safe from intrusion. While a variety of software programs are available for video conferencing, such as Skype, Facetime, or GoToMeeting, most are not encrypted, or compliant with Federal law to protect the privacy of your health communication. Interception of communication by third parties remains technically possible. You are responsible for information security on your own computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Due to the complexities of electronic media and the internet, the risks of telehealth include the potential for the release of private information, including audio, written materials and images which may be disrupted, distorted, interrupted or intercepted by unauthorized persons, despite your therapist's reasonable efforts. Consequently, your therapist cannot fully guarantee the security of telehealth sessions.

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