

**Tiffany C. Shanks, MA, LMFT**  
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist #84490  
www.tiffanyshankstherapy.com  
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### **Telemental Health Services and Informed Consent (Online Sessions)**

If requested your therapist may provide services via telephone or a HIPAA compliant video conferencing platform. Please be advised that the same rights, responsibilities, and privacy issues are applied to telemental health sessions as those applied to face-to-face sessions. Your therapist is not responsible for any technology-based issues such as bad connectivity or faulty equipment.

Please note that you will need access to certain technological services and tools to engage in telemental health-based services with your therapist.

- Telemental health has both benefits and risks, which you and your therapist will be monitoring as you proceed with your treatment.
- You can stop work by telemental health at any time without prejudice.
- You will need to participate in creating an appropriate space for your telemental health sessions.
- You will need to participate in making a plan for managing technology failures, mental health crises, and medical emergencies.
- It is possible that receiving services by telemental health will turn out to be inappropriate for you and that you and your therapist may have to cease work by telemental health at some point.
- Your therapist follows security best practices and legal standards in order to protect your health care information, but you will also need to participate in maintaining your own security and privacy.

#### **What is Telemental Health?**

“Telemental health” means, in short, “provision of mental health services with the provider and recipient of services being in separate locations, and the services being delivered over electronic media.” Services delivered via telemental health rely on a number of electronic, often Internet-based, technology tools. These tools can include videoconferencing software, email, text messaging, virtual environments, specialized mobile health (“mHealth”) apps, and others.

Your therapist typically provides telemental health services using the following tools:

- Doxy.me - <https://doxy.me/tiffanyshankslmft>

#### **Benefits and Risks of Telemental Health**

Receiving services via telemental health allows you to:

- Receive services at times or in places where the in-person service may not otherwise be available.
- Receive services in a fashion that may be more convenient and less prone to delays than in-person meetings.
- Receive services when you are unable to travel to the therapist’s office.
- The unique characteristics of telemental health media may also help some people make improved progress on health goals that may not have been otherwise achievable without telemental health.

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**Receiving Services Via Telemental Health Has the Following Risks:**

Telemental health services can be impacted by technical failures, may introduce risks to your privacy, and may reduce your therapist’s ability to directly intervene in crises or emergencies. Here is a non-exhaustive list of examples:

- Internet connections and cloud services could cease working or become too unstable to use.
- Cloud-based service personnel, IT assistants, and malicious actors (“hackers”) may have the ability to access your private information that is transmitted or stored in the process of telemental health-based service delivery.
- Computer or smartphone hardware can have sudden failures or run out of power, or local power services can go out.

Interruptions may disrupt services at important moments, and your therapist may be unable to reach you quickly or using the most effective tools. Your therapist may also be unable to help you in-person. There may be additional benefits and risks to telemental health services that arise from the lack of in-person contact or presence, the distance between you and your therapist at the time of service, and the technological tools used to deliver services. Your therapist will assess these potential benefits and risks, sometimes in collaboration with you, as your relationship progresses.

**Assessing Telemental Health Fit for You**

Although it is well validated by research, service delivery via telemental health is not a good fit for every person. Your therapist will continuously assess if working via telemental health is appropriate for your case. If it is not appropriate, your therapist will help you find in-person therapists with whom to continue services. Please talk to your therapist if you find the telemental health media so difficult to use that it distracts from the services being provided, if the medium causes trouble focusing on your services, or if there are any other reasons why the telemental health medium seems to be causing problems in receiving services. Raising your questions or concerns will not, by itself, result in termination of services. Bringing your concerns to your therapist is often a part of the process.

You also have a right to stop receiving services by telemental health at any time without prejudice. If your therapist also provides services in-person and you are reasonably able to access the therapist’s in-person services, you will not be prevented from accessing those services if you choose to stop using telemental health.

**Your Telemental Health Environment**

- You will be responsible for creating a safe and confidential space during sessions.
- You should use a space that is free of other people (i.e. a room, car, isolated part of your residence, etc.).

It should also be difficult or impossible for people outside the space to see or hear your interactions with your therapist during the session. If you are unsure of how to do this, please ask your therapist for assistance.

- Please consider wearing headphones during your sessions to improve privacy and sound experience.

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### **Our Communication Plan**

At our first session, we will develop a plan for backup communications in case of technology failures and a plan for responding to emergencies and mental health crises. In addition to those plans, your therapist has the following policies regarding communications:

- The best way to contact your therapist between sessions is by calling or messaging at (818) 493-9580. Please leave a voicemail if unavailable. Your therapist will respond to your messages within the next 24 hours, during her office hours.
- Please note that your therapist may not respond at all on weekends or holidays. Your therapist may also respond sooner than stated in this policy. That does not mean she will always respond that quickly.

Our work is done primarily during our appointed sessions, which will generally occur during Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 6:00pm. Contact between sessions should be limited to:

- Confirming or changing appointment times
- Billing questions

Please note that all textual messages you exchange with your therapist, e.g. emails and text messages, will become a part of your health record. Your therapist may coordinate care with one or more of your other therapists. Your therapist will use reasonable care to ensure that those communications are secure and that they safeguard your privacy.

### **Recordings**

Recording video or audio sessions is strictly prohibited by your therapist. Your therapist will not record video or audio sessions without your explicit consent.

### **Our Safety and Emergency Plan**

As a recipient of telemental health-based services, you will need to participate in ensuring your safety during mental health crises, medical emergencies, and sessions that you have with your therapist.

Your therapist will require you to designate an emergency contact. By signing below, you give permission for your therapist to communicate with this person about your care during emergencies.

In case of a medical or psychiatric emergency including feeling suicidal and/or homicidal please:

1. Call 911
2. Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency Room
3. Call the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT) at (818) 832-2410
4. Contact a hotline:
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - (800) 273-8255
  - Suicide Prevention Hotline - (877) 727-4747
  - Crisis Text Line - Text "HOME" to 741741

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**Your Security and Privacy**

Except where otherwise noted, your therapist employs software and hardware tools that adhere to security best practices and applicable legal standards for the purposes of protecting your privacy and ensuring that records of your health care services are not lost or damaged. As with all things in telemental health, however, you also have a role to play in maintaining your security. Please use reasonable security protocols to protect the privacy of your own health care information. For example, when communicating with your therapist, use devices and service accounts that are protected by unique passwords that only you know. Also, use the secure tools that your therapist has supplied for communications.

**Acknowledgement**

By signing below, I acknowledge full understanding of the terms and conditions of this agreement. I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this agreement and consent to participate in telemental health treatment with my therapist. Moreover, I agree to hold my therapist free and harmless from any claims, demands, or suits for damages from any injury or complications whatsoever, save negligence, that may result from such treatment. I understand that this signed agreement will be kept in my confidential file and I may request a copy of it at any time. I agree to provide information (i.e. address) on current location, maintain my emergency contact up-to-date, and to find out the location of my nearest emergency room to be used in cases where immediate medical or psychiatric assistance is needed.

I also understand that I am financially responsible to my therapist for fees not paid by any third-party payor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                                      Client Name (Please Print)                                      Signature of Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                                      Client Name (Please Print)                                      Signature of Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date                                      Tiffany C. Shanks, MA, LMFT

- Copy given to client
- Original retained by therapist