

## **INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

Please read this consent form carefully, as it describes the policies and procedures followed by your mental health professional and those of the laws and professional regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of Colorado as well as the Board of National Certified Counselors and the American Counseling Association.

### **ELIGIBILITY FOR ONLINE/VIDEO BASED COUNSELING SERVICES:**

Clients interested in receiving online counseling services must be 18 years old.

Clients interested in online or video based counseling services must consult with the Director to discuss eligibility as well as the terms and conditions that apply to said services. If it is determined that online counseling is appropriate, clients must submit written verification to the terms and conditions (see below) before services are rendered.

Online counseling services are most suitable for clients over the age of 18 years old who have either previously engaged in formal counseling services and/or are seeking short-term support for issues that are unrelated to major crisis, severe mental health issues, suicidal, homicidal or violent behavior (past or present). Clients under the age of 18 may possibly be seen if supervised by a parent/guardian during sessions and have received in person counseling with a clinician at Center Street Center previously.

Online counseling services are intended for clients who have limited access, availability or means to receive direct, face-to-face professional counseling services.

Although online counseling services may be helpful, direct, face-to-face services are highly recommended and encouraged, especially for clients either looking for long-term treatment or clients in major crisis.

Video Based Counseling does NOT provide crisis counseling and is not appropriate for clients who have a:

- History or current thoughts of suicidal, homicidal or violent behavior.
- History or current psychiatric episodes, hospitalizations or drug/alcohol dependence.
- History or current diagnosis of any of the following: Borderline Personality Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder Type 1, Mentally Ill/Chemically Addicted (MICA) and/or Schizophrenia.

### **FULL CLIENT DISCLOSURE & RIGHT TO REFUSE ONLINE COUNSELING SERVICES:**

If you have any history of major psychiatric episodes, hospitalizations or drug/alcohol dependence or have been diagnosed as any of the following – Borderline Personality Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Mentally Ill/Chemically Addicted (MICA), and/or Schizophrenia – you **must** disclose this information to the Director or your clinician, prior to being considered for online counseling services.

**Center Street Center**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

Failure to disclose or knowingly misleading or withholding the above said information excludes Center Street Center and any clinician from any legal obligation or liability related to said client's diagnosis, prognosis, outcome and/or actions.

If it is deemed at any point in the treatment that your needs are greater than the clinician's area of expertise or scope of practice and a client is unsuitable for video based counseling services, Center Street Center reserves the right to refuse and/or end treatment and appropriate referral sources will be provided.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ONLINE/VIDEO BASED TREATMENT:**

The duration of treatment is different for each person and can be difficult to estimate. We will address any concerns that you have about this; however, typical treatment is six to eight sessions. If you are uncomfortable with your treatment for any reason, you are asked to discuss this directly with your clinician or the Director. We will work with you to uncover what might be preventing progress, will modify goals with you if appropriate, and will make any necessary referrals for you for other professional services if necessary or at your request. Oftentimes, people find that they have a temporary increase in their level of distress when starting therapy because the process of working on personal issues can be difficult.

You as the client, understand that video counseling has limitations (as well as benefits) compared to in-person sessions, among those being the lack of "personal" face-to-face interactions, the lack of visual and audio cues in the therapeutic process and the fact that most insurance companies will not cover this type of therapy. You understand that video counseling with a clinician at Center Street Center is not a substitute for medication under the care of a psychiatrist or doctor. You understand that online counseling may not be appropriate if you are experiencing a crisis or having suicidal or homicidal thoughts. If a life threatening crisis should occur, you agree to contact a crisis hotline, call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital emergency room. You also understand that our clinicians follow the laws and professional regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or State of Colorado and the telehealth counseling will be considered to take place in either the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or Colorado (USA) depending on the state in which you live.

**ABOUT ONLINE/VIDEO BASED COUNSELING:**

Also known as Distance Counseling, Telepractice, Cyberpsychology, Telehealth, Behavioral Telehealth, Online Therapy, Online Counseling and Video Based Counseling. Online counseling is providing a psychotherapy service that is not "in person" and is facilitated through the use of technology. Such technology at Center Street Center is limited to video based counseling. Any other forms of technology such as email, text, phone are used as communication for general office purposes only (e.g. appointments, documentation, etc.) and not used for counseling or psychotherapy purposes. Telehealth Counseling is subject to all practice and ethical considerations discussed in this document and in the law, rules and regulations governing licensed practice in Colorado and Pennsylvania (USA).

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Client Signature

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**Center Street Center**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

Disadvantages include varying time zones, cultural differences, language barriers and strength of internet connection which may impact the delivery of services. Clients may provide off-line contact information in case of a technology breakdown.

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE:**

Tracy E. Hill, Ph.D., & Associates LLC | Center Street Center's practice follows local and regional laws and codes of ethics as applicable to Pennsylvania and Colorado. The scope of telehealth practice includes:

- Individual counseling and psychotherapy
- Diagnosis and treatment planning for mental and emotional disorders
- Prevention, behavior modification, and guidance to individuals, families, and organizations

**NATURE OF COUNSELING:**

When people use telehealth counseling, it is because they want something to be different in their lives. They may want to change their life situation, solve a particular problem, make a difficult decision, or understand what is happening in their lives, themselves or to those around them. As a first step in counseling, we will explore your feelings and concerns, decisions you want to make, or changes you may want. We will then guide you in your exploration, decisions and changes. For counseling to be most effective, you must make a commitment of time and energy and take active part in the counseling process; this may involve activities or homework between sessions or practicing new behaviors and/or ideas.

Counseling provides the opportunity for growth and self-discovery in the context of a safe, supportive, unbiased and nonjudgmental therapeutic relationship. Our clinicians use a multi modal approach to counseling depending on the individual(s) we are working with. Each person is unique to how they view themselves or others. What may work for you, may not be appropriate for another. We tailor our counseling practices to each individual using Trauma Focused Counseling, Cognitive Behavioral Counseling, Person Centered Counseling, Gestalt Therapy, and other counseling theories and practices as they may work best with you.

Please understand that there are no guarantees of what you will experience and what your outcomes may be; you enter this Informed Consent for Telehealth Counseling at your own risk. You agree that you understand the possible advantages and disadvantages of video based counseling and shall not hold accountable Tracy E. Hill, Ph.D. & Associates LLC | Center Street Center for any information or insight distributed here.

**DUAL RELATIONSHIPS:**

Although our sessions may be very intimate psychologically, ours is a professional relationship with important boundaries. Sexual involvement between therapist and client is never part of the therapeutic process nor are any other actions or dual relationship situations that might impair the clinician's objectivity, clinical judgment or therapeutic effectiveness or that could be exploitative in nature. Our clinicians will not accept any invitations via social networking sites nor will we respond to blogs, posts or comments written by clients or accept comments on our social networking sites from clients in which their identity is identified without their request to do so.

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Date

**Center Street Center**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

**AGREEMENT:**

This Informed Consent for Telehealth Counseling shall be interpreted only in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of Colorado and any legal proceeding associated with this Agreement will occur exclusively in the courts located in that state.

**PRIVACY POLICY:**

According to mental health licensing statutes, the law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and practitioner. Center Street Center is in compliance with the requirements of HIPPA. Confidentiality is taken seriously and discussing or releasing your information to any individual, agency or corporation except if such release is requested by a signed authorization form; or if a client indicates intent to do harm to her/himself or others.

**CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:**

Counseling is best experienced in an atmosphere of trust. For that reason, all counseling sessions are strictly confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission. Center Street Center does not videotape or record your telehealth sessions. There are exceptions to confidentiality where disclosure is required by law. Additionally, there may be times that a clinician may need to consult with an adjunct colleague in order to discuss aspects of our sessions to support our therapeutic work together and best support your process. In addition, our clinicians may discuss your case from a teaching perspective or case study in group supervision. When doing so, please understand that we will protect the use of your identifying details in order to protect your confidentiality. According to mental health licensing statutes, the law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and practitioner. Center Street Center follows the requirements of HIPPA. Confidentiality is taken seriously and discussing or releasing your information to any individual, agency, or corporation except if such release is requested by a signed authorization form; or if a client indicates intent to do harm to her/himself or others.

**LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY:**

What you discuss with the clinicians and/or interns at Center Street Center is kept confidential, or private with some exceptions. The Notice of Privacy Practices provides detailed information about how private information about your health care is protected and under what circumstances it may be shared. Confidentiality of email, texting and cell phone communication is not protected and should be limited to scheduling appointments, canceling appointments and the like. Web based counseling is confidential and supports confidentiality using a password protected Zoom link.

We make every effort to keep your information confidential. Likewise, we ask that you determine who has access to your computer and electronic information from your location when engaging in online counseling. We encourage you to communicate through a computer that you know is safe and wherein you can be assured of your confidentiality from others. Be sure to fully exit all online counseling sessions and emails. If we are unable to connect or are disconnected during a session due to a technological breakdown, please try to reconnect within ten minutes. If reconnection is not possible, we will schedule a new session time.

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Client Signature

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**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

We will protect the confidentiality of information received in our counseling relationship as specified by federal and state laws, written policies and ethical standards. Discussions between us and even the fact that you are in counseling, are kept confidential.

**LEGAL EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Legal exceptions to confidentiality are in place to protect your safety and the safety of others. This includes when there is reasonable suspicion of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect), adult dependent care abuse, elder abuse/neglect and when a client threatens to harm or kill others, or intent to damage another person's property. Legally, the clinicians at Center Street Center are mandated reporters of abuse or intent to harm another. If you are homicidal and make a serious threat to hurt another person or persons, we will contact 911 and make every attempt to notify the intended victim or victims. Additionally, if we are court ordered to release records, we must abide by the court order and we may be compelled by the court to testify and must answer all questions honestly.

**SUICIDE POLICY:**

If you are suicidal, or we deem after conducting a suicide risk assessment, that you may harm yourself, we will take all reasonable steps to prevent such harm to yourself. This may include breaking confidentiality, calling 911 or other reasonable means to prevent self-harm including contacting a person on your Intake form for emergency contact.

**PAYMENT FOR SERVICES:**

Insurance typically does not cover online counseling. Payments (co-pays, fees for service, etc.) for services must be made prior to the time of each session. You may make your payment via Paypal (paypal.me/tracyehillphd) or credit/debit (3% additional surcharge) if you fill out and return Credit Authorization Form. Current Fees and Services are listed on our website at <https://www.centerstreetcenter.com>. Please see our Financial Policy for more detailed information.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:**

You must provide 48 hours advanced notice for cancellation in order to prevent a Cancellation Fee. You can cancel via email (appts@centerstreetcenter.com), or call (484-896-9161). We understand that occasionally circumstances beyond your control may arise which would prevent you from keeping your appointment. However, the appointment is made just for you and we are unable to fill it with such short notice if you cancel without the required 48 hours notice.

**On Going Cancellations or Multiple No Shows:** It is understandable that occasionally an appointment will be cancelled or missed due to illness or emergency. However, your regular session day/time has been reserved for you. Our current client schedule does not allow for a great deal of flexibility with respect to continual cancellations, rescheduled appointments or no shows. If you find that your schedule is no longer able to accommodate the session time reserved for you or you would like to terminate counseling sessions, please discuss this with the Director or your clinician and we will do our best to either find an alternative time slot or refer you to another mental health clinician. You are responsible for keeping track of and attending your sessions.

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Client Signature

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Date

**Center Street Center**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING**

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEHEALTH COUNSELING AGREEMENT:**

I have read the above Informed Consent for TELEHEALTH Counseling and understand and agree to the terms listed:

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Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Client Name PRINTED \_\_\_\_\_

*Please be sure to sign and date each page and return to us before we can start counseling services.*

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Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_