

Telehealth Services Policy

Updated: 17/12/24

Client Consent

This document has been created to support mental health services being delivered via telephone or internet technology. Whilst there are benefits including giving access to those who cannot see a clinician face-to face (F2F) and convenience in terms of time and travel, there are many factors to consider. Please read this document carefully and speak to your clinician if you have any questions or concerns prior to your first telehealth consultation.

In commencing your telehealth consultation it is expected that you have read and accept the terms and recommendations in this document through your registration process.

What is telehealth?

Telehealth is a term that describes health services delivered via telephone or online technology. This technology encompasses mobile and landline telephone services, voice over internet technology and online video technology including platforms such as Skype, CoviU and Zoom. These technologies are similar in that they can provide contact between a clinician and a client over a period of time during a consultation. They vary in terms of the nature of the contact, the security and the user experience.

What telehealth service is being offered at Inner North?

Clinicians at Inner North are currently using the CoviU and/or Zoom video conferencing service as the primary platform for delivery, with telephone being the backup service in cases that the video consultation fails. Both CoviU and Zoom offer secure video conferencing. Visit their websites to learn more about these platforms and their privacy policies*.

CoviU: <https://www.coviu.com/> **Zoom:** <https://zoom.us/>

Telehealth consultations will be arranged as follows:

1. **You will receive an email prior to your consultation with the unique link** for the video conference. This is a unique link for the consultation between a specific clinician and a specific client at a specific time. It is secure and encrypted. The session will not be recorded.
2. **At the consultation time you will open this email and click the link.** This will take you to your browser and you will be in an online waiting room. Your clinician will commence the session.
3. **The clinician should be waiting to invite you into the online consultation room at the scheduled time.** You will receive an SMS if the clinician is held up. Please do the same if you are delayed. You will be asked to confirm your location at the time of the telehealth consultation.
4. **Sessions will be like an in-room consultation for the most part.** The videoconferencing platform allows communication, the clinician can share screens to show materials or complete questionnaires, and there is a whiteboard feature. Standard consultations are 50 minutes.

* As with F2F consultation, video and telephone sessions WILL NOT be recorded. Clients are asked to respect the clinician's privacy and (a) not record sessions or use materials from session for therapy without prior consent and (b) not have others present without prior agreement.

If the videoconference fails or the connection is disrupted for up to 5 minutes, the consultation will continue via the phone. Clients are expected to have their phone nearby and charged for the consultation.

What do clients need to consider in using telehealth?

There are both technical, environmental and personal considerations in using telehealth.

- **Technical:**
 - Internet bandwidth is important. Having internet access with a minimum of 350kbps per video stream. You can visit www.speedtest.net to check this. You may want to ask others sharing an internet service to be off during the time of consultation.
 - Use a computer (laptop or desktop) with a webcam and large screen if possible.
 - Minimise the other applications open on your computer.
 - Check that the sound and voice is working prior to the consultation.
 - Ensure you have the latest internet browser on your computer.
 - **NOTE:** Your clinician will not be able to trouble shoot problems for a video call. If technical matters aren't resolved within 5 minutes, a phone consultation will occur.
- **Environmental:**
 - Ensure you can have your telehealth consultation in a room that is private. A study or spare room is preferable.
 - Consider speaking with others in your home about your consultation, the need for privacy and silence, and consider putting a sign on your door as a reminder.
 - Position your computer and webcam in a place that has good light and has a backdrop (behind you) that is neutral.
 - Minimise background noise and distractions (e.g. close windows, doors, blinds, turn off televisions and other devices).
- **Personal:**
 - Each client presents with unique personal characteristics and circumstances. Consider your own and speak with your clinician if you have questions or concerns.
 - You may feel safer to have a telephone teleconference rather than video conference in some circumstances, however this may also be limiting for some individuals. Please speak with your clinician if this is the case.

Safety and emergency contacts

Mental health practitioners have a duty of care for all clients they are treating. Safety planning is a routine part of clinical mental health care. Due to the nature of telehealth, Inner North clinicians will ask you for 2 emergency contacts. These people must be informed that you are receiving telehealth treatment.

As at any other time, please call 000 if you or another person is at risk of immediate harm.

Fees, rebates and payment

The fees, rebates and payment process for telehealth consultations follow the same policies as face-to-face consultations provided by your clinician. This is documented in your registration form.

Booking a telehealth appointment

Telehealth appointments are scheduled the same as face-to-face consultations as follows:

- Visit <https://yourinnernorth.com.au/our-people>, find the clinician, call or email them, or click the link for an online booking if available.

LEGAL NOTE: All clinicians at Inner North are independent private practitioners. The policy in this document must be read in conjunction with your clinician's registration form and practice policies.