



## INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information focusing on doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and Hugh S. Smith, Ph.D. & Associates, P.C., herein after “HSSA.”

### **Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology**

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy or psychological assessment services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks.

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist’s private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. HSSA will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of the session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. HSSA will typically not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist’s ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

### **Electronic Communications**

We will decide together which kind of telepsychology service to use. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

With regard to electronic communication between sessions, HSSA will only use email communication with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges with our office should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that HSSA cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email. Therefore, we will not discuss any clinical information by email and prefer that you do not either. Also, we cannot guarantee that we will regularly check email, nor can we guarantee that we will respond immediately, so these methods should not be used if there is an emergency.

### **Confidentiality**

HSSA has a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. We will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of communications (for example, only using secure networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in HSSA's original Informed Consent form signed by you still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

### **Emergencies and Technology**

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, call the HSSA office at (717) 391-6808, or call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and the therapist/evaluator will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform agreed upon to conduct therapy/assessment. If you do not receive a re-contact back within two (2) minutes, the therapist/evaluator will make an effort to contact you via telephone by the contact number that you provided.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

### **Fees**

The same fee rates will apply for telepsychology as apply for in-person psychotherapy and assessment services. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic psychotherapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

**Records**

The telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way. HSSA will maintain a record of our session in the same way we maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with our policies.

**Informed Consent**

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date