



Dear Alabama MFTs,

In light of the spread of coronavirus and memorandum posted by ABEMFT today, we wanted to reach out to provide some information for those of you considering moving to telemental health for your practice. The rules and regs can be found at <http://mft.alabama.gov/PDF/2020/RulesRegs.pdf>. The sections specific to telemental health start on page 56.

Critical Points to Remember

- The rules and regulations in the link above list the topics that need to be covered in the 15 CE hours starting on page 56. Be sure to compare this list to the learning objectives listed in any training programs you are considering.
- If you hold an Alabama MFT license, you can only practice in Alabama. *Your client must be within state lines to offer telemental health.* If you are licensed in multiple states, please check the telemental health rules and regs for the other states to ensure compliance
- You must use HIPAA compliant options for telemental health services. Facetime, Skype, Gmail, and the free Zoom accounts are **NOT** HIPAA compliant.
- Email is not confidential. Please be sure to explain the risks of email to your client so they understand if they engage in email with you that they are accepting the risk that someone somewhere could see their information. This applies to HIPAA compliant email programs as well...HIPAA compliance ensures encryption, but someone somewhere who works for that email company could read your email, so confidentiality is not guaranteed
- Clients need to be aware of the risks and benefits of telemental health services and understand that they take are taking on some risk themselves. One of those is that they are in control of the confidentiality on their side of the communication. Consider if you are at home with your roommate, significant other and/or children and how you will ensure confidentiality for your clients for your part. You are responsible for confidentiality on your end and explaining the risks of confidentiality to clients on theirs. Strongly encourage clients to be behind closed doors with headphones for both phone and video conferencing to protect confidentiality on their end.
- Some clients may not be appropriate for telemental health services, such as those with active suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, delusions, or those in a relationship experiencing domestic violence. Consider how to screen your clients for these and what referral options you could utilize if needed.
- If you choose to provide therapy over the phone, you still have to explain the risks/benefits of confidentiality as it is still considered telemental health services.
- AAMFT has provided information about coronavirus at <https://www.aamft.org/Events/Coronavirus-Event-Status-Updates.aspx?WebsiteKey=8e8c9bd6-0b71-4cd1-a5ab-013b5f855b01>. This includes information about what AAMFT recommends for HIPAA compliant platforms and resources for you and your clients.

Our thoughts are with you as we all do our best to adapt to these rapidly changing circumstances.

Yours in Service,

ALAMFT Leadership Team