Iowa Family Counseling

Tele-Therapy Informed Consent

Iowa Family Counseling can provide convenient tele-therapy to clients across the state of Iowa, through HIPAA compliant programs. Tele-therapy, by definition, is the delivery of therapeutic services by which the provider and client are not at the same physical location.

Tele-therapy may include, but is not limited to, mental health care delivery, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, transfer of medical data, and education using interactive audio, video, or data communications (i.e. video chat, phone, cellular phone, internet, email, or text messages). The exchange of information will not be direct and any paperwork exchanged will likely be provided through electronic means or through postal delivery.

Like with face-to-care therapy, there are potential risks and benefits of tele-therapy, which may include:

Potential risks:

1. There is a possibility of technology failure, which may result in alternate methods of service.
2. Tele-therapy may not be the best suited modality for everyone. If the provider believes that the client would be better served with another type of service or level of care, they may be referred to another provider in the client's geographical area.
3. That with tele-therapy, there is a greater likelihood of misunderstandings that may arise from the lack of visual cues (nonverbal and verbal) and voice intonations when communicating electronically.
4. It is possible a 3rd party within your environment, or the provider's environment, to overhear the conversations being conducted via tele-therapy. Any documents or text messages could be obtained by a 3rd party. Viruses, Trojans, Worms, and other programs could reside on client's or provider's computers which could send private information to a 3rd party. Iowa Family Counseling, LLC takes reasonable precautions to ensure the confidentiality of information transmitted through any electronic means (including tele-therapy), and uses current encryption standards that meet legal requirements.

Potential benefits:

1. Online therapy has been proven to be as effective as in-person therapy, therefore, the benefits include those outlined in the standard informed consent document.
2. It provides greater flexibility, particularly those who live in remote areas who have limited resources, mobility, or transportation barriers.
3. Tele-therapy reduces costs associated with gas and travel time to the office and/or school for face-to-face sessions. There is also a reduction in session cancellations due to weather, school closures, etc, as these concerns are eliminated with tele-therapy, allowing for more consistent and productive treatment.

4. Tele-therapy can help with eliminating the social stigma related to receiving mental health services, by conducting sessions in the comfort of your own home or private space.

In emergencies, in the event of disruption of service, or for routine or administrative reasons, it may be necessary to communicate by other means, which will be communicated between provider and client.

The laws and professional standards that apply to in-person behavioral health and counseling services also apply to telehealth services. This document does not replace other agreements, contracts, or documentation of informed consent.