

Telehealth Statement

South Carolina Board of Examiners in Psychology

Effective Date: March 11, 2019

The South Carolina Board of Examiners in Psychology agrees with the American Psychological Association's "Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology," and encourages psychologists in South Carolina to use these guidelines when considering the use of telehealth in their practice. To practice telepsychology in South Carolina, a person must be a licensed psychologist in South Carolina. §§ 40-55-50(C) and 40-55-55. There are exceptions under §40-55-90, such as a matriculated intern or student at a recognized training program engaged in activities defined as the practice of psychology and as a government employee of this State or a federal government providing psychological services within the scope of employment, § 40-55-90(A)(3) and (9).

For a psychologist practicing in South Carolina, the Board has adopted the APA Code of Ethics and incorporated them into R 100-4. See specifically R 100-4. C(4), which states:

Adding new services and techniques, the psychologist, when developing competency in a service or technique that is either new to the psychologist or new to the profession, shall engage in ongoing consultation with other psychologists or relevant professionals and shall seek appropriate education and/or training in the new area. When such competence involves providing direct human services, the psychologist should inform the clients of the innovative nature and the known risks associated with the service(s), so that the client can exercise freedom of choice concerning such service(s).

Note, a psychologist can be disciplined under § 40-55-150(8) for violating principles of ethics as adopted by the Board in its regulations.

These APA guidelines can be found at the following website:

<http://www.apapracticecentral.org/ce/guidelines/telepsychology-guidelines.pdf>

Licensed psychologists in South Carolina should familiarize themselves with the entire document and apply the APA guidelines in accordance with the South Carolina statutes (Chapter 55) and regulations (Chapter 100) that apply to licensed psychologists. These can be found on the board website:

<http://www.llr.state.sc.us/pol/psychology/index.asp?file=laws.htm>

A synopsis of APA's Guidelines follows:

Introduction

These guidelines are designed to address the developing area of psychological service provision commonly known as telepsychology. Telepsychology is defined, for the purpose of these guidelines, as the provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies as expounded in the “Definition of Telepsychology.” The expanding role of technology in the provision of psychological services and the continuous development of new technologies that may be useful in the practice of psychology present unique opportunities, considerations and challenges to practice. With the advancement of technology and the increased number of psychologists using technology in their practices, these guidelines have been prepared to educate and guide them.

Competence of the Psychologist

Guideline 1: Psychologists who provide telepsychology services strive to take reasonable steps to ensure their competence with both the technologies used and the potential impact of the technologies on clients/patients, supervisees or other professionals.

Standards of Care in the Delivery of Telepsychology Services

Guideline 2: Psychologists make every effort to ensure that ethical and professional standards of care and practice are met at the outset and throughout the duration of the telepsychology services they provide.

Informed Consent

Guideline 3: Psychologists strive to obtain and document informed consent that specifically addresses the unique concerns related to the telepsychology services they provide. When doing so, psychologists are cognizant of the applicable laws and regulations, as well as organizational requirements that govern informed consent in this area.

Confidentiality of Data and Information

Guideline 4: Psychologists who provide telepsychology services make reasonable effort to protect and maintain the confidentiality of the data and information relating to their clients/patients and inform them of the potentially increased risks to loss of confidentiality inherent in the use of the telecommunication technologies, if any.

Security and Transmission of Data and Information

Guideline 5: Psychologists who provide telepsychology services take reasonable steps to ensure that security measures are in place to protect data and information related to their clients/patients from unintended access or disclosure.

Disposal of Data and Information and Technologies

Guideline 6: Psychologists who provide telepsychology services make reasonable efforts to dispose of data and information and the technologies used in a manner that facilitates protection from unauthorized access and accounts for safe and appropriate disposal.

Testing and Assessment

Guideline 7: Psychologists are encouraged to consider the unique issues that may arise with test instruments and assessment approaches designed for in-person implementation when providing telepsychology services.

Interjurisdictional Practice

Guideline 8: Psychologists are encouraged to be familiar with and comply with all relevant laws and regulations when providing telepsychology services to clients/patients across jurisdictional and international borders.

Conclusion

It is important to note, that it is not the intent of these guidelines to prescribe specific actions, but rather, to offer the best guidance available at present when incorporating telecommunication technologies in the provision of psychological services. Because technology and its applicability to the profession of psychology is a dynamic area with many changes likely ahead, these guidelines also are not inclusive of all other considerations and are not intended to take precedence over the judgment of psychologists or applicable laws and regulations that guide the profession and practice of psychology. It is hoped that the framework presented will guide psychologists as the field evolves.