


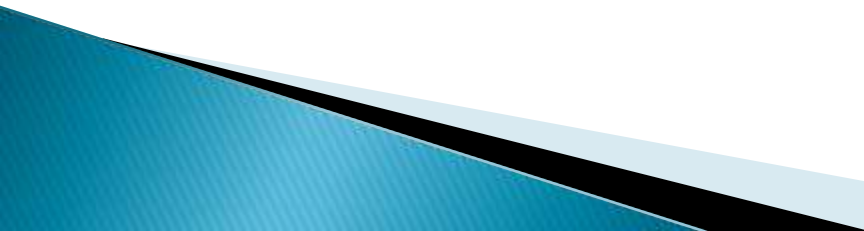
# Online Connections

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# Objectives

- ▶ Participants will have a thorough understanding of the history and growth of Telehealth Counseling as a treatment option.
  - ▶ Participants will be exposed to the Clinical Outcomes of Telehealth Counseling from the American Association of Psychiatry.
  - ▶ Participants will be able to discuss the feasibility and effectiveness of Telehealth Counseling.
  - ▶ Participants will be provided credentialing and reimbursement standards for Telehealth Counseling.
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# Outline

- ▶ History of Telehealth Psychiatry
  - ▶ What is Telehealth Counseling
  - ▶ Behavioral Health and Telehealth
  - ▶ The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
  - ▶ Telehealth and Medicare Reimbursement
  - ▶ Specific Requirements for Alabama and Telehealth
  - ▶ Trends in Telehealth in Addiction Treatment.
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# History of Telehealth Psychiatry

- ▶ 1959 Nebraska Psychiatric Institute was using early videoconferencing to provide group therapy, long term therapy, consultation–liaison psychiatry, and medical student training at the Nebraska state hospital in Norfolk.
  - ▶ 1969, Massachusetts General Hospital provided psychiatric consultations for adults and children.
  - ▶ 1990, Telehealth medicine spread further across the world, particularly in Australia.
  - ▶ 2000s, The field began seeing it as effective, but slightly different, than an in–person care and research in outcome studies provided a platform for practice guidelines...thus the American Telehealth Association was created.
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# History

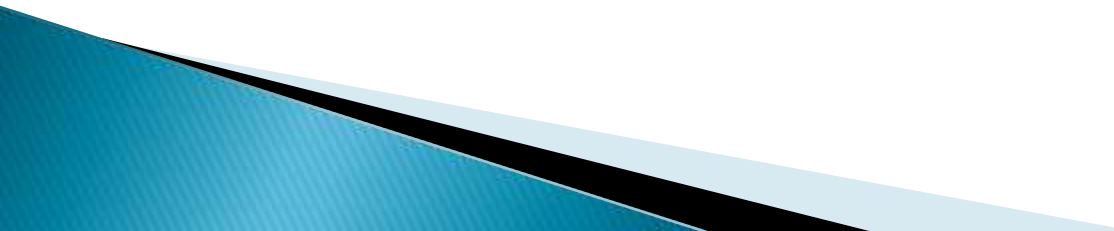
- ▶ According to the American Telehealth Association, Telepsychiatry is equivalent to in-person care in diagnostic accuracy, treatment effectiveness, and patient satisfaction; stating: it saves time, money and other resources.
- ▶ Patient privacy and confidentiality issues parallel in-person care.
- ▶ Telepsychiatry effectively leverages specialty expertise, which facilitates health care reform. (Bashshur RL, Shannon GW. History of Telemedicine evolution, context and transformation, Mary Ann Liebert, New Rochelle NY 2009)

# Reactions for the Crowd

- ▶ Any Experience with online counseling, telepsychiatry or other forms of telehealth Counseling?



# Benefits of Telehealth Counseling

- ▶ Helps meet clients needs for convenient, affordable and readily-accessible mental health services.
  - ▶ Improve access to Mental Health/Substance Abuse specialty care that might not be otherwise available...rural or underserved areas.
  - ▶ Bring care to the patients location
  - ▶ Help integrate behavioral health and primary care, leading to better outcomes
  - ▶ Reduce the need for trips to the Emergency Room
  - ▶ Reduce delays in care
  - ▶ Improve continuity of care and follow up
  - ▶ Reduce the need for time off from work, childcare services
  - ▶ Reduce potential transportation barriers
  - ▶ Reduce the stigma barrier
- 

# Behavioral Health and Telehealth Counseling.

- Below are the individual states in the U.S. that require some form of reimbursement for services provided by telehealth (usually for services delivered via video conferencing or “VTC”):
  - 1. Maine
  - 2. Oregon
  - 3. California
  - 4. Colorado
  - 5. Georgia (complications)
  - 6. Hawaii
  - 7. Kansas
  - 8. Kentucky
  - 9. Louisiana
  - 10. Texas (Medicaid)
  - 11. Oklahoma
  - 12. Virginia
  - 13. New Hampshire
  - 14. Maryland
  - 15. Michigan
  - 16. Massachusetts
  - 17. Arizona
  - 18. Montana
  - 19. New Mexico
  - 20. Mississippi
  - 21. Idaho
  - 22. Kentucky (Medicaid)
  - 23. Missouri
  
- As reported by mHIMSS, American Telemedicine Association has been tracking new legislation. They have identified these states as having initiated similar telehealth legislation since January 2013:



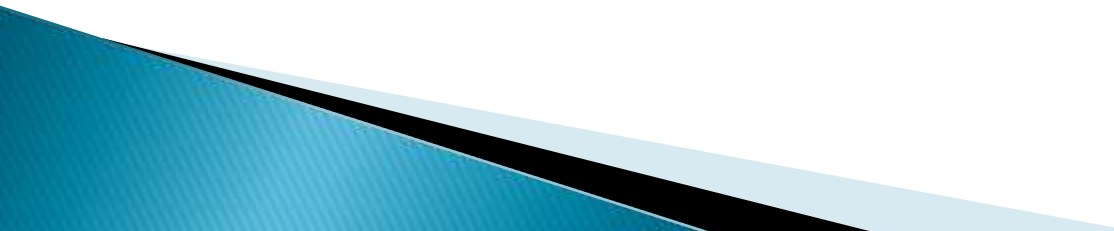
# Online Therapy Opportunities

- ▶ **Affordable Online Counseling** – #1 Online Counseling Website
- ▶ **Adwww.betterhelp.com/**
- ▶ **Talkspace.com**
  - Affordable, Private, Professional Counseling Anytime, Anywhere. Get Started Now!
  - Talk with a Therapist Now · 100% Private Environment · Convenient & Affordable · 5 Star Reviews
  - #1 Online Therapy Site
  - Secure & Confidential · More Than 500,000 Users · As Low As \$32/Week · Text, Audio & Video Chat
- ▶ ...it completely changed my view of therapy – Business Insider
- ▶ **Adtry.brightervision.com/Therapy-Sites**
- ▶ **Adwww.faithfulcounseling.com/**
  - Professional, Affordable Christian Therapy Anytime, Anywhere. Get Started Now!
- ▶ [www.betterhelp.com](http://www.betterhelp.com)
- ▶ [www.e-counseling.com](http://www.e-counseling.com)
- ▶ [www.pcmag.com](http://www.pcmag.com)
- ▶ [www.breakthrough.com](http://www.breakthrough.com)
- ▶ [www.7cups.com](http://www.7cups.com)
- ▶ [www.online-therapy.com](http://www.online-therapy.com)
- ▶ [www.iprevail.com](http://www.iprevail.com)
- ▶ [www.Serenityonlinetherapy.com](http://www.Serenityonlinetherapy.com)
- ▶ [www.virtualtherapistnetwork.com](http://www.virtualtherapistnetwork.com)

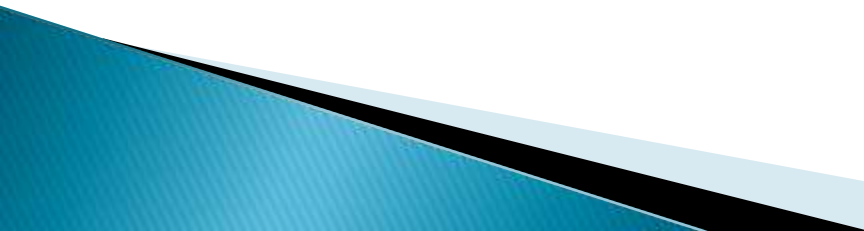
# Suicide In Rural Areas

- ▶ Americans in Rural Areas More Likely to Die By Suicide
  - ▶ on 10/16/2017 3:31 PM
  - ▶ Category: Tier 2
  - ▶ Suicide Rates for Rural Counties Consistently Higher than Urban Counties from 2001–2015
- ▶ Rural counties in the U.S. consistently had higher suicide rates than metropolitan counties from 2001–2015, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The new report examined annual county level trends in suicide rates during 2001–2015 for rural counties, medium/small metropolitan counties, and large metropolitan counties, as well as demographics and mechanism of death. Overall, suicide death rates for rural counties were higher than medium/small metropolitan counties and large metropolitan counties. Additional findings include: across metropolitan and rural areas, suicide rates for males were four to five times higher than for females during the study period; suicide rates for Black, non-Hispanic individuals in rural areas were consistently lower than suicide rates for Black, non-Hispanic individuals in urban areas; and White, non-Hispanic individuals have the highest suicide rates in metropolitan counties while American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic individuals have the highest rates in rural counties. Findings by age group revealed increases in suicide rates for all ages with the highest rates and greatest rate increases in rural counties.
- ▶
- ▶ To view the source and press release in its entirety: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p1005-rural-suicide-rates.html>
- ▶
- ▶ To read the complete Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) from October 6, 2017: Suicide Trends Among and Within Urbanization Levels by Sex, Race/Ethnicity, Age Group, and Mechanism

# Cost and Insurance

- ▶ 32 States have legislated that private insurance cover telemedicine, according to the American Telemedicine Association 7/2016
  - ▶ Medicaid programs in 48 states reimburse for some telepsychiatry services.
  - ▶ Medicare will reimburse for telepsychiatry services if the community is considered rural.
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# Definition of Terms

- ▶ Distant Site: site at which the physician or other licensed practitioner delivering the service is located at the time the service is provided via telecommunications system.
  - ▶ EHR: electronic health record
  - ▶ Originating Site: location of the patient at the time the service is provided via telecommunication system.
  - ▶ Teleconferencing:
  - ▶ Telehealth
  - ▶ Telemedicine
- 

# Insurance Coverage

- ▶ Medicare Part B: covers certain services, like office visits and consultations that are provided:
  - Using an interactive 2 way telecommunication systems
  - By a doctor or certain other health care provider who isn't at your location.
  - A doctors office
- A Hospital
- A Critical Access Hospital
- A Rural Health Clinic
- A Federally Qualified Health Center
- A Hospital-based or Critical Access Hospital-based Dialysis Facility.
- A Skilled Nursing Facility
- A Community Mental Health Center

# Medicare/ Medicaid

- ▶ Services that Get Paid


The Service must be Furnished via an interactive telecommunications system

The Practitioner Furnishing the Service must meet the Telehealth Requirements, as well as the usual Medicare Requirements.

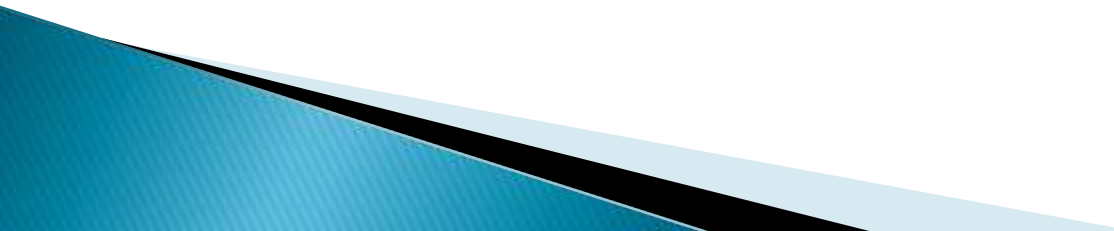
The Service must be Furnished to an eligible Telehealth Individual

The Individual Receiving the Services must be in an eligible originating site.

# Reimbursable Services for Telemental Health

- ▶ Individual Psychiatric Interview
  - ▶ Individual Psychotherapy
  - ▶ Individual & Group Health and Behavioral Assessment and Intervention
  - ▶ Neurobehavioral Status Examination
  - ▶ Pharmacologic Management
  - ▶ Smoking Cessation
  - ▶ Alcohol and/or Substance Abuse Structured Assessment (for ex. DAST,AUDIT) and brief intervention, 15 to 30 minutes and interventions greater than 30 minutes
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# Reimbursable

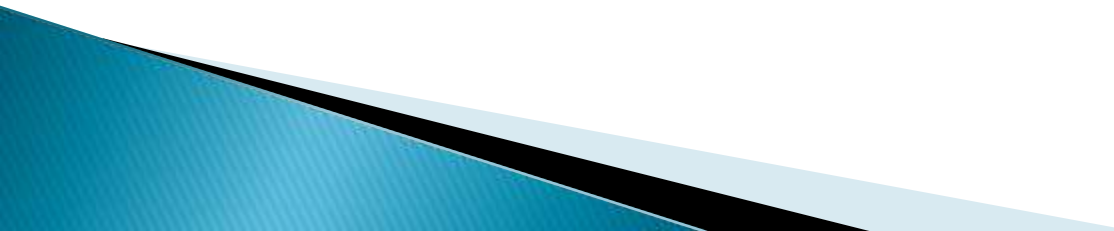
- ▶ Annual Alcohol Misuse Screenings...15 minutes
  - ▶ Brief face-to-face Behavioral Counseling for Alcohol Misuse
  - ▶ Annual Depression Screening
  - ▶ Obesity counseling
  - ▶ Family Psychotherapy, with or without Family present
  - ▶ Psychological Testing by Computer
- 



# Trends in Telemedicine Use in Addiction Treatment

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6LHnC5FWLQ&sns=em>

# Provider Restrictions

- ▶ Physicians
  - ▶ Nurse Practitioners
  - ▶ Physician Assistants
  - ▶ Clinical Nurse Specialist
  - ▶ Clinical Psychologist
  - ▶ Clinical Social Workers
  - ▶ Registered Dietitians
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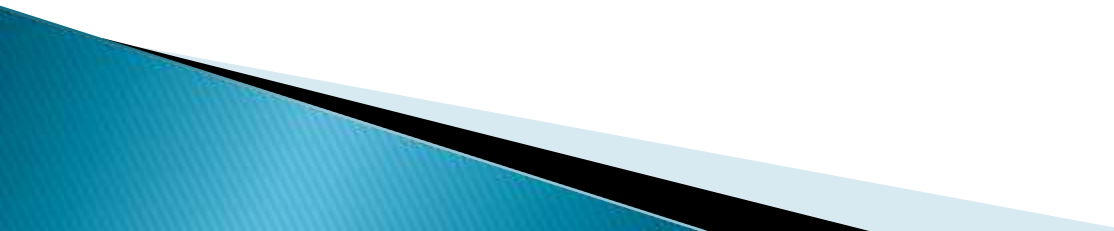
# Private Payers

- ▶ Medicaid: left up to the states to decide those services covered. All 50 states provide so form of telemedicine coverage.
- ▶ VA/Tricare: worlds largest Telehealth Program

# Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama

- ▶ BCBS of Alabama statewide telehealth initiative will provide access to quality healthcare to rural communities through the use of telehealth technologies.
- ▶ Telehealth is designed to fill the gaps and facilitate care for conditions that fall in the following categories
  - ▶ Cardiologic Conditions
  - ▶ Dermatologic Conditions
  - ▶ Infectious Disease
  - ▶ **Behavioral Health**
  - ▶ Neurologic Disease

# BCBS/Alabama ...Approved Telemedicine Site Partners

- ▶ Alabama Dept. of Public Health
  - ▶ AltaPointe Health Systems
  - ▶ Baptist Health Care/ Birmingham, Talladega, Jasper,
  - ▶ Cheaha Mental Health
  - ▶ Citizens Baptist Medical Senior Care Unit
  - ▶ Eastside Mental Health Oneonta, Al
  - ▶ Etowah-DeKalb-Cherokee Mental Health
  - ▶ Gulf Health Hospital, Bay Minette
  - ▶ Mental Health Board, Bibb, Pickens, Tuscaloosa Counties
  - ▶ Mobile Infirmary
  - ▶ Montgomery Aids outreach
  - ▶ Montgomery Psychiatry
  - ▶ Shelby Baptist Health Center
  - ▶ Southwest Alabama Mental Health
  - ▶ St. Vincent's
  - ▶ USA Mitchell Cancer Center
  - ▶ Washington County Nursing Home
  - ▶ West Alabama Mental Health Center
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# Ethical Considerations

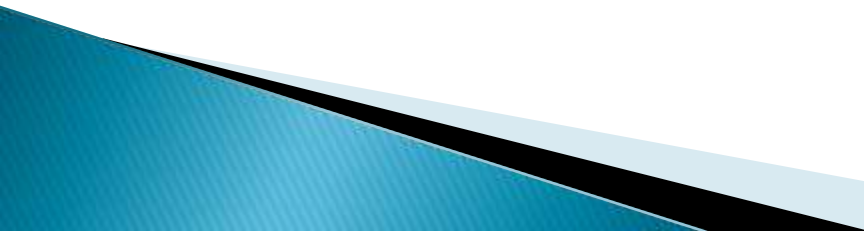
- ▶ Counselors using electronic means in which counselor and client are not in immediate proximity must present clients with local sources of care before establishing a continued short or long-term relationship. Counselors who communicate with clients via Internet are governed by NBCC standards for Web Counseling.
- ▶ The NBCC Policy Regarding the Provision of Distance Professional Services states:
- ▶ The NBCC Policy Regarding the Provision of Distance Professional Services identifies specific actions National Certified Counselors (NCCs) must take when providing distance services.
- ▶ STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- ▶ 1. NCCs shall adhere to all NBCC policies and procedures, including the Code of Ethics.
- ▶ 2. NCCs shall provide only those services for which they are qualified by education and experience. NCCs shall also consider their qualifications to offer such service via distance means.
- ▶ 3. NCCs shall carefully adhere to legal regulations before providing distance services. This review shall include legal regulations from the state in which the counselor is located as well as those from the recipient's location. Given that NCCs may be offering distance services to individuals in different states at any one time, the NCC shall document relevant state regulations in the respective record(s).
- ▶ 4. NCCs shall ensure that any electronic means used in distance service provision are in compliance with current regulatory standards.
- ▶ 5. NCCs shall use encryption security for all digital technology communications of a therapeutic type. Information regarding security should be communicated to individuals who receive distance services. Despite the use of precautions, distance service recipients shall be informed of the potential hazards of distance communications. Not the least of these considerations is the warning about entering private information when using a public access or computer that is on a shared network. NCCs shall caution recipients of distance services against using "auto-remember" user names and passwords. NCCs shall also inform recipients of distance services to consider employers' policies relating to the use of work computers for personal communications.
- ▶ 6. To prevent the loss of digital communications or records, NCCs who provide distance services shall maintain secure backup systems. If the backup system is also a digital mechanism, this too shall offer encryption-level security. This information shall be provided to the recipient of professional services.
- ▶ 7. NCCs shall screen potential distance service recipients for appropriateness to receive services via distance methods. These considerations shall be documented in the records.

- ▶ 8. During the screening or intake process, NCCs shall provide potential recipients with a detailed written description of the distance counseling process and service provision. This information shall be specific to the identified service delivery type and include considerations for that particular individual. These considerations shall include the appropriateness of distance counseling in relation to the specific goal, the format of service delivery, the associated needs (i.e., computer with certain capabilities, etc.), the limitations of confidentiality, the possibility of technological failure, anticipated response time to electronic communication, and any additional considerations necessary to assist the potential recipient in reaching a determination about the appropriateness of this service delivery format for their need(s).
- ▶ 9. Because of the ease in which digital communications can inadvertently be sent to other individuals, NCCs shall adopt behaviors to prevent the distribution of confidential information to unauthorized individuals. NCCs shall discuss actions the recipient may take to reduce the possibility that they will send information to other individuals by mistake.
- ▶ 10. NCCs shall provide recipients of distance professional services with information concerning their professional credentials and links to the respective credentialing organization Web sites.
- ▶ 11. NCCs, either prior to or during the initial session, shall inform recipients of the purposes, goals, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of services and techniques. NCCs also shall provide information about rights and responsibilities as appropriate to the counseling setting. As a part of this type of service provision, NCCs shall discuss with recipients the associated challenges that may occur when communicating through distance means.
- ▶ 12. In the event that the recipient of distance services is a minor or is unable to provide legal consent, the NCC shall obtain a legal guardian's consent prior to the provision of distance services. Furthermore, NCCs shall retain copies of documentation indicating the legal guardian's identity in the recipient's file.
- ▶ 13. NCCs shall avoid the use of public social media sources (e.g., tweets, blogs, etc.) to provide confidential information. To facilitate the secure provision of information, NCCs shall provide in writing the appropriate ways to contact them.
- ▶ 14. NCCs shall provide recipients of distance services with specific written procedures regarding emergency situations. This information shall include emergency responders near the recipient's home location. Given the increased dangers intrinsic to providing certain distance professional services, NCCs shall take reasonable steps to secure reasonable referrals for recipients when needed.
- ▶ 15. NCCs shall develop written procedures for verifying the identity of the recipient at each instance of receiving distance services. Examples of verification means include the use of code words or phrases.
- ▶ 16. NCCs shall limit use of information obtained through social media sources (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) in accordance with established practice procedures provided to the recipient at the initiation of services.

- ▶ 17. NCCs shall provide information concerning locations where members of the public may access the internet free of charge or provide information regarding the location of complimentary Web communication services.
- ▶ 18. NCCs shall retain copies of all written communications with distance service recipients. Examples of written communications include e-mail/text messages, instant messages and histories of chat-based discussions even if they are related to housekeeping issues such as change of contact information or scheduling appointments.
- ▶ 19. At a minimum, NCCs shall retain distance service records for a minimum of five years unless state laws require additional time. Due to the nature of most distance services, it may be convenient for NCCs to retain records for longer durations, and thus may be considered useful for research or other professional activities. NCCs shall limit the use of records to those permitted by law, professional standards and as specified by the agreement with the respective recipient of distance services.
- ▶ 20. In recognition of the inherent ethical implications which may arise, NCCs shall develop written procedures for the use of social media and other related digital technology with current and former recipients. These written procedures shall, at a minimum, provide appropriate protections against the disclosure of confidential information and the creation of multiple relationships. These procedures shall also stipulate that personal accounts be distinct from any used for professional purposes.
  
- ▶ Additional Mental Health Guidelines
  - ▶ •APA 2013 Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology
  - ▶ •NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standard for Technology for Social Work Practice (2017)
  - ▶ •model regulatory standards for technology and social work practice ASWB International Technology Task Force, 2013–2014



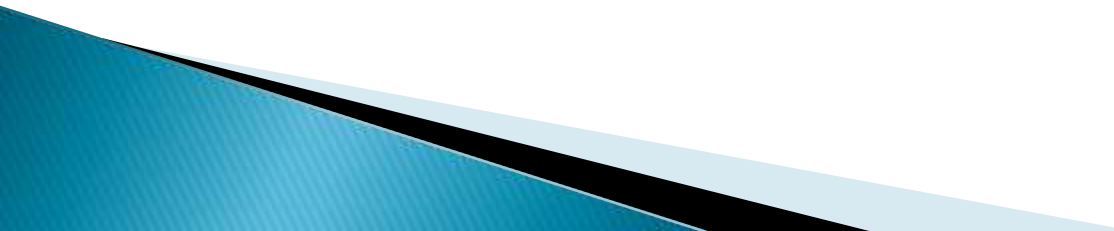
# State Rules and Regulations re: Telehealth Counseling

- ▶ Alabama
  - ▶ Counselors
  - ▶ CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE [http://abec.alabama.gov/PDFs/Code\\_Ethics\\_Nov-09.pdf](http://abec.alabama.gov/PDFs/Code_Ethics_Nov-09.pdf)
  - ▶ A.12. TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS
    - ▶ a. Use of Technology. When technology applications are used in counseling services, licensed professional counselors must ensure that: (1) the client is intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable of using the technology application; (2) the technology application is appropriate for the needs of the client; (3) the client understands the purpose and operation of the technology applications; and (4) a follow-up of client use of a technology application is provided to correct possible misconceptions, discover inappropriate use, and assess subsequent needs.
    - ▶ b. Explanation of Limitations. Licensed professional counselors ensure that clients are provided information as a part of the counseling relationship that adequately explains the limitations of technology applications.
    - ▶ c. Access to Technology Applications. Licensed professional counselors provide for equal access to technology applications in counseling services. (See A.2.a.).
    - ▶ d. Distance Technology Counseling Services. Licensed professional counselors who employ distance technology for counseling services must observe and demonstrate all aspects of client rights and welfare, client confidentiality, professional responsibility (including relationships with other professionals), procedures for assessment, and resolution of ethical issues reflected in the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice adopted by the Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling. Addressing and resolving any disparities between ethical or legally-mandated practices required in face-to-face counseling services versus distance technology counseling services is the ethical duty of the licensed professional counselor. Ethical standards for a licensed professional counselor who employs distance technology counseling services shall apply to client care and public protection regardless of the destination point of such counseling services, unless otherwise prohibited by law. (See A.3.a.).
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# What's Next

- ▶ Meet Amelia....
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/k31W34IMmB8>

# Conclusion

- ▶ Be Aware of the Changing Landscape of Online Services including, telehealth, apps, etc
  - ▶ Think ahead and investigate possibilities to expand your telehealth to the primary care sector
  - ▶ Keep abreast of Laws and Regulations affecting Telehealth Counseling
  - ▶ Look for further credentialing opportunities for Telehealth to place you ahead of the game.
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- ▶ Thank you and enjoy the rest of the Conference 😊