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Counseling @ St. John's

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DISTANCE COUNSELING INFORMED CONSENT ADDENDUM

Distance counseling—also called telemental health, telepsychology, or online therapy—is defined as counseling using electronic, telephone, or video technologies.

This document serves as an addendum to the main counseling consent form, and I ask all clients who wish to meet with me virtually (by video or phone) to read and sign this form. You may sign the document electronically, or you may mail signed forms to me at the above address.

Distance counseling options offered: Although in-person counseling has advantages, I also offer counseling online using a video-based platform. Phone counseling is available as a backup for clients in crisis situations or due to technology failure. I have received training in distance counseling and am authorized to work with clients who reside in the state of New Mexico and are physically located in the state at the time of the session.

Getting started: Prior to arranging the first session, I ask potential clients to complete the registration form, which provides me information on the concerns you want to bring to counseling, as well as an emergency contact (preferably someone who can physically check on you if there is an emergency). I also require an initial consultation by phone with potential distance counseling clients to assess the suitability of distance counseling.

Technology options: I use the following platforms

- Video system: Doxy.me (<https://doxy.me/counselingstjohns>)
 - Additional platforms are available but do not provide the same level of security.
- Phone: 505-506-6716 (cell)
- Secure text messaging: Signal (<https://signal.org/>)

Video-based counseling works best if we both have strong internet connections. Using a device with a stable webcam (e.g., a desktop computer or laptop that can be placed on a flat surface); Doxy.me and other video-based platforms can be used on smartphones, but the smaller screen size and difficulty keeping a still image can be more challenging. Prior to the start of each session, I advise you to close any other computer or phone applications that may be running to avoid competing for internet bandwidth or sudden interruptions.

Identification and safety: During the first video session, I will ask you to display photo identification to verify your identity, and we will set a password or PIN to use during future sessions for identity verification. I will also ask you to confirm your geographic location at the start of each session. At the beginning of each session, I will confirm with you that you are alone (or that anyone present is there with your permission) using a code word we will establish together.

Communicating clearly: When meeting by video, we will take time at the start of each session to ensure the video positioning and audio/video quality are acceptable. At times, the video feed on either side may freeze, or there could be temporary audio issues. Please feel free to ask questions if there is something you don't understand or can't hear and be patient if I need to do the same.

Technology failure: If there is a technical problem during a distance counseling session, please log off/hang up and reconnect to the video system as soon as possible. If either of us cannot reconnect via video, I will attempt to call you using the contact information on file. Secure texting via signal will also allow for secure instant communication.

Confidentiality: In addition to the issues described in the main consent form, distance counseling involves some potential threats to confidentiality. The Doxy.me platform offers a high level of security, but other platforms may allow sensitive information to be viewed. It is also important that you keep your computer equipment and phone secure so that others cannot view information or see evidence of your involvement in counseling, if that is something you wish to keep private.

Emergencies: It is especially difficult for me to support you in a crisis if you are located outside Albuquerque. As noted in the main consent form, if you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, please call 911 or have someone take you to the nearest emergency room. There are several national and statewide crisis lines available:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
- NM AGORA Crisis Center: 505-277-3013
- NM Crisis and Access Line: 855-662-7474 (toll free)

We will also identify local emergency resources for your area and develop a customized crisis plan for you during our initial sessions.

Consent to Distance Counseling

By signing this Distance Counseling Informed Consent Addendum, you acknowledge the following:

- I have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions contained in this form.
- I have been given appropriate opportunity to address any questions or request clarification for anything that is unclear to me.
- I am voluntarily agreeing to receiving distance counseling services.
- I understand that I may stop such treatment or services at any time.

CLIENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

SIGNATURE – CLIENT

DATE

SIGNATURE – COUNSELOR

DATE

SIGNATURE – SUPERVISOR

DATE