

SPRINGER PUBLISHING WEBINAR SERIES

Transitioning to Telemental Health During a Pandemic

5 Things Every Counselor Needs to Know

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Speaker

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- Certification & Licensure: Board Certified Telemental Health Provider (BC-TMH; former Distance Certified Counselor/DCC); LMHC, LPC, CASAC, CRC, NCC, ACS, GCDF
- Relevant Grants: NARACES "Practice and Instruction of Distance Counseling: Educator, supervisor, and counselor perspectives"; ACES "Technological Training Interventions to Increase Counselor Competence"

Image Description: Photo of Speaker

Photo Credit: St. John's University

AGENDA

- Common Language
- Relevance and Timeliness of Telemental Health (TMH) and Distance Counseling (DC)
 - 1. Professional Ethics in TMH/DC**
 - 2. Counseling Relationships in TMH/DC**
 - 3. Equity and Access in TMH/DC**
 - 4. Technology in TMH/DC**
 - 5. Funding and Reimbursement in TMH/DC**
- Other Issues in DC/TMH
- Question/Answer/Discussion Period

To what extent did you provide TMH/DC BEFORE COVID?

1. All of my clients/students
2. 75% of my clients/students
3. 50% of my clients/students
4. 25% or less of my clients/students
5. I did NOT provide DC/TMH to my clients/students
6. I was not practicing in a counseling role prior to COVID



To what extent are you currently providing TMH/DC?

1. All of my clients/students
2. 75% of my clients/students
3. 50% of my clients/students
4. 25% or less of my clients/students
5. I do NOT provide DC/TMH to my clients/students
6. I am not currently a practicing in a counseling role



Common Language to Discuss Telemental Health (TMH) and Distance Counseling (DC)

Definitions

- **Distance counseling (DC):** “thoughtful use of technologies (synchronous, asynchronous, and computerized counseling programs) in order to assist clients to function with, or grow towards, increased wellness in their personal and professional lives” (Malone, 2007, p. 3)
- **Telemental Health (TMH):** “the practice of either clinical or nonclinical aspects of healthcare provided via communications technology” (Luxton, Nelson, & Maheu, 2016, p. 9).
- Multiple terms and terminology; not necessarily universal; one study found 19 terms to describe DC/TMH (Ostrowski & Collins, 2016)
- “Why do you keep using TMH **and** DC?”

Common Language to Discuss Telemental Health (TMH) and Distance Counseling (DC)

Some terms/language for today:

- **Platforms:** synchronous, asynchronous (store and go), blended, turnkey, etc.
- **Modalities:** Telephone, videoconferencing, email, text/chat, other technologies (i.e. gaming, podcasting, blogging, mobile apps, self-help sites, self-paced programs/iCBT, etc. – *limited direct client/counselor interaction*)
- **Settings:** intentional/planned vs. unintentional/not planned (e.g. crisis)
- **Other terms:** F2F (face to face), HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act), FERPA (Family Education Rights & Privacy Act), CACREP (Council on the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs), ACA (American Counseling Association; not Affordable Care Act),

Relevance and Timeliness of Telemental Health (TMH) and Distance Counseling (DC)

- TMH/DC not new; Long history with psychiatry dating back to 1950s and 1960s; NASA; Telephone counseling – 1950s in UK, 1970s in US
- More recent accessibility (and reduced cost) to technology has increased its popularity and utility
- COVID forced TMH/DC on many practitioners from multiple specialties: mental health, substance use, school, rehabilitation, career counseling, etc.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Civil Rights' statement March 17, 2020 “will not impose penalties for noncompliance with regulatory requirements under HIPAA rules against covered health care providers in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency” (DHHS, 2020, para. 4).

Relevance and Timeliness of Telemental Health (TMH) and Distance Counseling (DC)

- Research overall reports positive outcomes, although not necessarily superior outcomes, when compared to F2F treatment. Ample studies in last 5-10 years.
- Benefit to specific (and general) populations: rural, military, limited mobility, those unlikely to seek treatment; BUT not all populations have access to technology
- Counselor competence varies. “Training Dilemma” - Inconsistent training for TMH/DC Practice; even before COVID; not a CACREP requirement in the 2016 standards
- Training credentials available but not required; may not be available to all specializations; training programs vary in cost, hours, and content
- States and licensing boards may or may not have specific requirements for training and/or supervision regarding distance services
- **Pros and cons to the practice of DC/TMH**

Professional Ethics in TMH/DC

Legal and Ethical Guidelines

- Legal requirements – beyond HIPAA & FERPA – state laws
- Professional Ethical Codes Specific to your Counseling Identity, as well as Credentials/Practice
- Counselor Competence
- Technology
- Client Confidentiality & Identity
- Client Screening
- **Informed Consents/Emergency Planning**



Image Description: legal scale and gavel on table
Photo Credit: Pexels.com Sora



Image Description: Hand passing pen and paper to folded hands
Photo Credit: Pexels.com Andrea Piacquadio

Counseling Relationships in TMH/DC

Building Trust and Rapport from a Distance

- Different from F2F services – how?
- Modality impacts relationship development strategy
- Logistics: workspace, distractions, verifying identity/privacy, technological security/confidence
- Nonverbal Communication: eye contact, body language, video image
- Identifying Emotion: silence and timing, assistive tools



Image Description: Two people talking on a couch
Photo Credit: Pexels.com Polina Zimmerman



Image Description: Person sitting in chair at laptop
Photo Credit: Pexels.com Cotton Bro

Equity and Access in TMH/ DC

Assessing your Client/Student Context

- Benefit of accessing diverse providers (clinically, culturally, etc.)
- Benefit to rural communities; those with travel restrictions
- Limited access to technology, including devices, internet, bandwidth, and skill
- Disparities in internet use, broadband access and smartphone use based on race, education, and income
- Limited access to privacy and confidentiality



Image Description: Hands holding mobile phone
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Farmhouse on a farm
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Colored rays representing bandwidth
Image source: MS Office

Technology in TMH/DC

Constantly Evolving, Changing, & Updating

- Safety, security & encryption; beyond password protection
- Third party providers
- All devices – phones, laptops, file storage, records, etc.
- Regular updates & maintenance
- Client technology
- Voice assisted technologies



Image Description: Person using a mobile phone
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Person using a tablet
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Person using a laptop
Image source: MS Office

Funding and Reimbursement in TMH/DC

Varies by Context and Practice

- Insurance Approvals
- Insurance Reimbursements
- Client Reimbursements
- Agency/Funding Source Approvals
- Malpractice Insurance Coverage
- Remember: counselor competence, licensure restrictions, documentation, and HIPAA/ePHI



Image Description Calculator
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Stacks of paper files
Image source: MS Office



Image Description: Computer keyboard with math symbols
Image source: MS Office

Other Issues in TMH/DC

- **Counselor Self-Care**
- **Growing & emerging technologies:** mobile apps, iCBT, wearable technologies
- **Specific interventions,** e.g. group counseling, career, substance use, etc.
- **Specific populations or clinician concerns,** e.g. children, veterans, depression, eating disorders, etc.
- **Beginning a DC/TMH practice**
- **Training, certification, & supervision in DC/TMH**
- **Ongoing training and professional development**

Summary

- DC/TMH will continue to grow
- DC/TMH is here to stay, but continues to change
- Evidence supports its use
- Pros and cons to practice
- Ethical and effective practice relies on
 - **Counselor preparation**
 - **Counselor competence**
 - **Counselor responsibility**



Image Plant growing in the ground with roots visible underground
Image source: MS Office

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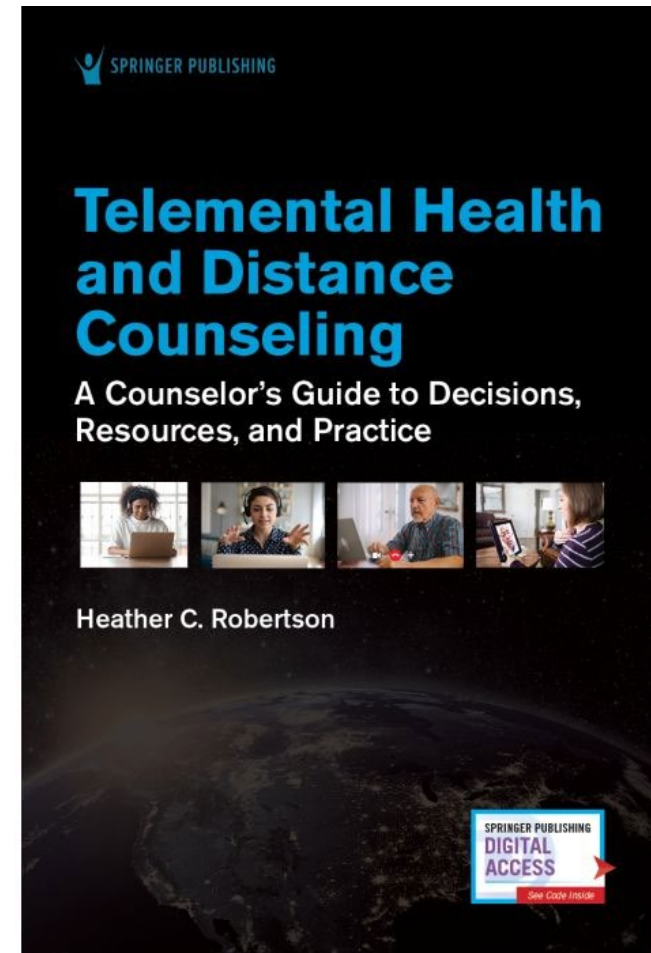
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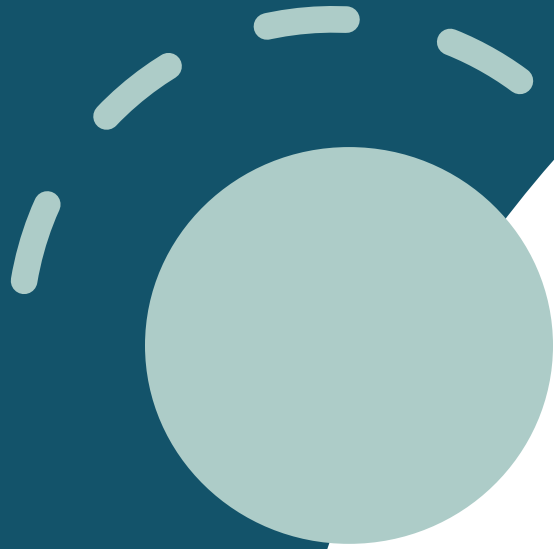
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Questions





Thank you for watching!
Be safe and we will see you soon!

Additional questions may be sent to
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