

Frequently Asked Questions about Telehealth Counselling

I am concerned that my telehealth video session won't feel private. Do you have any recommendations?

- Find a more quiet or private space in your home;
- Use headphones so that others don't hear the other side of the conversation. You might also find that you can hear better and don't need to speak as loudly. Many headphones have integrated microphones.
- Reduce distractions and make this time a special time for yourself. Make a cup of your favourite tea or have some paper to make notes or draw while you connect with your counsellor
- If an hour is more than you can manage on any given day, simply mention it to your counsellor. They will adapt to your time frame and respond to what you are needing in the moment to the best of their ability
- If, for some reason, you are participating in your scheduled telehealth session from a space other than your home, please mention it to your counsellor so that they are aware

What steps do counsellors take to ensure privacy & confidentiality?

Our counsellors follow safety & privacy guidelines that include technological & physical safeguards:

- Counsellors must enable the waiting room function so that the host only "admits" the participants that should be in the session
- Counsellors must make passwords mandatory to join meetings
- Counsellors must not post links to any meeting on social media or the website
- Counsellors must ensure they have end-to-end encryption enabled on their Telehealth Zoom accounts.
- Counsellors continue to use a password-protected database to save client records
- Counsellors must have a private & confidential space to conduct Telehealth sessions

There has been a lot on the news about intruders on video conferencing calls. What is your centre doing to minimize the risk?

We know that feeling safe is a crucial part of being able to engage in counselling. There are definitely some limitations to any internet activity such as:

- technological connection interruptions or failures
- technological communication is not guaranteed to be fully secure

- private environment for those connecting on telehealth platforms

We are using Zoom Telehealth which has the highest standards and functions to safeguard your privacy, including HIPAA & PIPEDA compliance. We also have a Zoom recently made some modifications to its settings to ensure the privacy it promises. Here are links to recent information from Zoom <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/04/01/a-message-to-our-users/> and <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/04/01/facts-around-zoom-encryption-for-meetings-webinars/> & <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy-and-security.html>

Here is what we're doing to minimize the risk of intruders on our calls:

- Using a *waiting room* function that allows the host to only *admit* the participants that should be in the session
- Making passwords mandatory to join meetings
- Only sending video session invitations by email to the intended recipients and never posting links to any meeting on social media or the website
- Ensuring we have end-to-end encryption enabled on our Telehealth Zoom accounts.

What does HIPAA stand for? What does PIPEDA stand for?

- HIPAA is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
<https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-hipaa.pdf?zcid=1231>
- PIPEDA is the Personal Information Protection and Electronics Documents Act
https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda/pipeda_brief/

Are there other privacy considerations? What about recordings?

We'll happily address any concerns you may have and do our best to share with you how we are working diligently and ethically to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will need your help to ensure privacy and confidentiality:

- We will send an email invitation to you personally to participate in a telehealth video counselling session or peer support group. We ask that you do not forward this invitation to anyone. ○ As an extra safety mechanism, we all use a waiting room and will only admit into the session the people who have been the intended recipients of the invitations.
- We will not record any session without your prior approval and signed consent. We ask that you do not record any session either without the approval of the counsellor.
- No group participant will be able to record any session (Zoom technology safeguard)
- We will not take screenshots of our computer screens during counselling sessions or peer support group without prior permission and signed consent. We ask that you do not take a screenshot of your computer screen (Zoom technology safeguard renders screenshots "fuzzy" so that no one can be identified).

Are there any other risks you are addressing?

We will manage any risks associated with what is shared in telehealth video sessions in the same way we would do during a face-to-face interaction:

- We understand that there may be some risks to any counselling or support. While the intention and benefit of counselling is to enhance well-being, it may lead to an increase in intensity of feelings as grief is explored and expressed.
- We will follow procedure regarding limits to confidentiality.
- Counsellors are required to report imminent risk of suicide, physical harm to others, and/or child or dependent adult abuse or neglect. If your file is subpoenaed in court, we are required to release information
- If the risk is associated with your child/teen, we will contact you immediately to report and discuss the next steps for support and to ensure safety.
- If we become unexpectedly disconnected from our video session, we will call you on the number we have on file
- If you or your family participates in one of our support groups, we will ask that you respect and protect the confidentiality of other group participants.

Will my benefits provider recognize telehealth counselling? Will they cover my fees?

More and more, benefits providers recognize telephone and video counselling sessions as valuable. We have worked to achieve the highest degree of security and privacy on the Zoom Telehealth platform we utilize and we are aware that these standards are satisfactory and recognized by many benefits providers.

We recommend that you contact your benefits provider and verify their criteria as it pertains to counselling methodologies.

I always struggle with technology. Any tips for me?

Do not worry. Technology can be our best friend and our worst enemy. We get it! Here are a few things you can do to prepare for your session, especially the first time.

- Join the Zoom session 5-10 minutes ahead of time. You will land in the waiting room and have to wait there, but at least you know it works. You can use those few minutes to get ready.
- Test your audio and video
- Make sure you choose the correct audio and video sources
- You can adjust the lighting (it's best if the source of light is in front of you than behind) and try to set the camera at your eye level for a more natural interaction

- Close applications that have pop ups: the notifications will be distracting