



PROVISIONS FOR INFORMED CONSENT FOR TEMPORARY TELE-COUNSELING SERVICES (COVID-19)

This Informed Consent for **temporary** tele-counseling sessions contains important provisions for providing counseling services using the phone or the internet during the period of distance learning as defined by the Department of Catholic Schools. Please read this carefully, and let your counselor know if you have any questions.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct enacted by the Archdiocese of San Antonio, all tele-counseling services provided during this time will occur with two (2) trained mental health professionals who have been familiarized with interim processes and standards through participation in online information sessions with the of Department of Catholic Guidance and Counseling personnel.

Benefits and Risks of Tele-Counseling

Tele-Counseling refers to providing counseling services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of tele-counseling is that your child and the school counselor can engage in counseling services despite the cancellation of on-campus instruction. This will be helpful in ensuring continuity of care in the midst of the current COVID-19 pandemic while students are engaging in distance learning. Although there are benefits of tele-counseling, there are some differences between in-person counseling and tele-counseling, as well as some risks. For example:

Risks to confidentiality. Because tele-counseling sessions take place outside of the counselor's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if your child is not in a quiet place during the session. The counselor will take reasonable steps to ensure your child's privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find an appropriate place in your home for your child's session where interruptions would be minimal (i.e., dining room table while siblings work/play in the living room). However, please notate the following location requirements:

- Your child should not be in a bedroom during the tele-counseling session
- Your child should not be in a bathroom during the tele-counseling session
- Your child should not be in a locked space that is far removed from a common area in the home

**Counselors will end the tele-counseling session immediately if your child is participating from one of the above listed locations.*

It is also important for you to protect the privacy of your child's session if they are using your cell phone or other device. Your child should participate in counseling only while in a room or area where other people cannot overhear the conversation.

Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact tele-counseling. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.

Crisis management and intervention. It is preferred that a parent be home during the tele-counseling session to be able to respond to any crises that may arise (as evidenced by giving verbal consent at the beginning of the tele-counseling session). Parents will be required to give the counselor a phone number that they are available at in the event that a crisis situation occurs during your child's tele-counseling session.

Efficacy. Most research shows that tele-counseling is about as effective as in-person counseling. However, some counselors believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. Given the current state of emergency that has led to the closure of physical school facilities, tele-counseling is the recommended medium to continue counseling services.

Electronic Communications

You and your child's counselor will decide together which kind of tele-counseling service to use that will be most effective and convenient for your child. You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use tele-counseling services. You are solely responsible for obtaining any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in tele-counseling.

For communication between sessions, use email or phone to communicate with your child's counselor. You should be aware that the counselor cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated via email. Email communication **should not** be used if there is an emergency with your child as the counselor may not check email multiple times per day. In the event of a counseling emergency please take your child to one of the agencies listed at the end of this consent form.

Confidentiality

Counselors have a legal and ethical responsibility to protect all communications that are a part of our tele-counseling. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that the counselor cannot guarantee communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to the communications. Counselors will use a secure, non-public facing medium for tele-counseling to keep your child's information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of such communications (for example, only using secure networks for tele-counseling sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for tele-counseling).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that apply to in person counseling still apply to tele-counseling, all information shared in the session is confidential with the **exception** of the following: if your child discloses that they are a danger to themselves or a danger to others, if they disclose that they, or another youth or elderly adult, are being abused or neglected, or a court issues a subpoena.

Appropriateness of Tele-counseling

At such a time that the Department of Catholic Schools has determined that it is safe to resume on campus instruction, counselors will resume in-person sessions at the school and shall discontinue all tele-counseling services. In the event that tele-counseling is no longer the most

appropriate method to continue care during this time, the counselor will refer you to resources in the community that would be better suited to support the needs of your child while they are not in school.

Records

The tele-counseling sessions shall not be recorded in any way by either the counselor, student, or the parent unless agreed to by all parties. Counselors will document the counseling session in the same way they maintain records of in-person sessions.

Community Crisis Referral Resources

Clarity Child Guidance Center
8535 Tom Slick Drive, San Antonio
(210) 616-0300

San Antonio Behavioral Hospital
8550 Huebner Road, San Antonio
(210) 541-5300

Laurel Ridge Treatment Center
17720 Corporate Woods Drive, San Antonio
(210) 491-9400

Center for Health Care Services
227 Drexel, San Antonio
24/7 Crisis Number: (210) 223-7233

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

SAMHSA's The Disaster Distress Helpline
1-800-985-599

Parent/Legal Guardian Informed Consent: Tele-mental Health Services for a Minor

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that was agreed to for in-person school counseling services and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement.

Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

I agree to allow my child, _____, to receive tele-counseling services from the school counselor employed by his school _____ (school name), during the school closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature*

**eSignature equivalent to physical signature*

Date

Parent/Guardian Emergency Phone Number