

The Ethics of Telepsychology

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What is Telepsychology?

- ▶ **APA defines it as:**
 - ▶ *the provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies*
 - ▶ Include telephone, mobile devices, interactive videoconferencing, email, chat, text, and internet
- ▶ **Services that can be provided include:**
 - ▶ Psychological evaluations/assessments
 - ▶ Therapy
 - ▶ Consultations
 - ▶ Patient education

Benefits of Telepsychology

- Improves access to mental health services that may not otherwise be accessible
- Brings the mental health care to the patient's location
- Reduces the time needed for patients to take off of work, find day care, etc. to access appointments that are far away
- Reduce delays in care

Limitations of Telepsychology

- **Less personal**
- **Inability to interpret body language**
- **Low quality (or non-existent) internet services**
- **Legal and ethical issues**

APA Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology

- ▶ *“Statements that suggest or recommend specific professional behaviors, endeavors, or conduct for psychologists”*
- ▶ Aspirational in intent
- ▶ **Two most salient issues:**
 1. The psychologist's knowledge and competence in use of technology
 2. Client's full understanding of inherent risks

APA Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology

- ▶ **8 Guidelines:**
 1. Competence
 2. Standards of Care
 3. Informed Consent
 4. Confidentiality
 5. Security and Transmission of Data and Info
 6. Disposal of Data and Info and Technologies
 7. Testing and Assessment
 8. Interjurisdictional Practice

Guideline 1: Competence of the Psychologist

“Psychologists who provide telepsychology services strive to take reasonable steps to ensure their competence with both the technologies used and the potential impact of the technologies on clients/patients, supervisees or other professionals.”

Guideline 2: Standards of Care in the Delivery of Telepsychology Services

“Psychologists make every effort to ensure that ethical and professional standards of care and practice are met at the outset and throughout the duration of the telepsychology services they provide.”

Guideline 3: Informed Consent

“Psychologists strive to obtain and document informed consent that specifically addresses the unique concerns related to the telepsychology services they provide. When doing so, psychologists are cognizant of the applicable laws and regulations, as well as organizational requirements that govern informed consent in this area.”

Guideline 4: Confidentiality of Data and Information

“Psychologists who provide telepsychology services make reasonable effort to protect and maintain the confidentiality of the data and information relating to their clients/patients and inform them of the potentially increased risks to loss of confidentiality inherent in the use of the telecommunication technologies, if any.”

Guideline 5: Security and Transmission of Data and Information

“Psychologists who provide telepsychology services take reasonable steps to ensure that security measures are in place to protect data and information related to their clients/patients from unintended access or disclosure.”

Guideline 6: Disposal of Data and Information and Technologies

“Psychologists who provide telepsychology services make reasonable efforts to dispose of data and information and the technologies used in a manner that facilitates protection from unauthorized access and accounts for safe and appropriate disposal.”

Guideline 7: Testing and Assessment

“Psychologists are encouraged to consider the unique issues that may arise with test instruments and assessment approaches designed for in-person implementation when providing telepsychology services.”

Guideline 8: Interjurisdictional Practice

“Psychologists are encouraged to be familiar with and comply with all relevant laws and regulations when providing telepsychology services to clients/patients across jurisdictional and international borders.”

Louisiana Telepsychology Guidelines

Define telepsychology as:

“Practice of psychology including assessment, diagnosis, intervention, consultation, or info by psychologist using interactive telecommunication that enables a psychologist and client, at two different locations separated by distant to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously”

Louisiana Telepsychology Guidelines

- ▶ Decisions regarding the appropriate use are made on a case-by-case basis
- ▶ Must have necessary training and skills
- ▶ Provision of telepsychology services not legally prohibited in LA
- ▶ Appropriateness of telepsychology should be assessed throughout provision of services

Louisiana Telepsychology Guidelines

- ▶ Must have an Emergency Management plan
- ▶ Document use of telepsychology in clinical record
- ▶ Any services that require personal interaction with, touch, or examination of the client likely not suitable
- ▶ Insure integrity of examination procedures is not compromised

Louisiana Telepsychology Guidelines

- ▶ Responsibilities of the Licensed Psychologist
 - ▶ Psychologist and client identity verification
 - ▶ Provider and patient location documentation
 - ▶ Secure communications/electronic transfer of client
 - ▶ Non-secured communications
 - ▶ Informed consent
 - ▶ Privacy

Main Points

- ▶ Insure that the use of telepsychology is appropriate for the client and his/her needs
 - ▶ Obtain knowledge, skills and experience in the method(s) to be used
 - ▶ Method should be appropriate for the client
 - ▶ Discuss all potential risks and benefits with the client (i.e., informed consent)
 - ▶ Have an emergency plan
 - ▶ Be cognizant of all federal, jurisdictional, and/or international laws
 - ▶ Document, document, document
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Resources

- <http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology.aspx>
 - <http://www.lsbep.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Telepsych-Guidelines-1-15-6.0.pdf>
 - <http://nationalpsychologist.com/2015/05/technology-changes-ethics-for-private-practice/102887.html>
 - <http://kspope.com/ethics/email.php>
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