

Is Telecounseling for Me?

Telecounseling Fact Sheet - Benefits/Risks/Limitations

Although telecounseling can provide several advantages for improving client accessibility to counseling support, there are many key points to consider. One major point of consideration is that telecounseling is not an "On-Demand" type of service and will require an initial face-to-face intake with a mental health counselor to have pre-approval for in-state counseling. Appointments for telecounseling must be set up in advance as with face-to-face counseling appointments during standard clinic office hours. NEOMED enrolled students who are currently in their third- and fourth-year clinical rotations are eligible for telecounseling services.

Below is a list of the Benefits, Risks, and Limitations, for telecounseling to consider before requesting an initial intake:

Benefits:

- **Increased Access to Support** - Improved access to medical care by enabling me to obtain counseling services remotely, off-campus (within the state of Ohio).
- **Barrier Removal** - More efficient clinical evaluation and management of my mental health.
- **Continuity of Care** – Enables me to continue treatment with a mental health provider at NEOMED if I have a rotation that takes me away from the area.

Risks:

- **Potential for disruption of data transmission** - Despite reasonable efforts on the part of the counselor, the transmission of my personal information could possibly be disrupted or distorted by technical failures.
- **Potential for interception of sensitive data** -The transmission of my personal information could possibly be interrupted by unauthorized persons; and/or the electronic storage of my personal information could be accessed by unauthorized persons.
- **Poor Video Quality** -The counselor may determine that the transmission lacks adequate quality, thus necessitating a face-to-face meeting with me, or at least a rescheduled telecounseling video session.
- **Possible Equipment Failure** – Equipment deficiencies or failures may delay medical evaluation and treatment.

Limitations:

- **Treatment Location** – You must be physically located in Ohio to receive services.
- **Face-to-Face Intake Required**- You must undergo initial face-to-face intake with counselor to determine appropriate level of care.
- **Not Recommended for Everyone**- Some restrictions apply with certain mental health conditions. Receiving telecounseling services may be contraindicated with:
 - Recent suicide attempt(s), psychiatric hospitalization, or psychotic processing (last 3 years)
 - Some cases of anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, etc.
 - Moderate to severe alcohol or drug abuse
 - Severe eating disorders
 - Repeated “acute” crises (e.g., occurring once a month or more frequently)
- **Not a Substitute for Face-to-Face Counseling** – It is not a complete form of counseling support, as with all the benefits available in face-to-face counseling.
- **Accessibility is Not “On-Demand”** – You must be clinically approved for telecounseling and must schedule your appointments in advance during office hours, just like face-to-face scheduled counseling appointments.
- **Private Location Only** – You cannot receive counseling if you are in a public area or around others. You must comply with a consistent, pre-established, and clinically agreed upon location.
- **Cell Phone Use Not Permitted** – You must use a computer or tablet, as cell phones lack the extra level of security protection required for confidential counseling.
- **State Law Restrictions** - Due to each states’ unique laws and requirements for licensure and the practice of counseling, Ohio mental health clinicians are generally prohibited from practicing across state lines.