

Template for Telehealth Mental Health Encounters - Addressing COVID 19

Zakia Alavi, MD - Chief Medical officer, MSHN

ACRONYMS USED

- **HCP**- Health Care Provider (therapists, RN, doctors)
- **PS**- Person Served (patients)
- **CBT**- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- **SP**- Supportive Psychotherapy

BACKGROUND

Many providers may be unfamiliar with the provision of telehealth services.

PS may be uncomfortable or unwilling to engage in services by remote access, especially if they are used to seeing and being seen by the HCP in person.

Response to a Pandemic can be addressed if the HCP utilizes basic CBT and SP techniques.

The following template is recommended for conducting phone/video visits.

STARTING YOUR SESSION

1. Establish Continuity - Start with a routine greeting.
2. Establish Safe Space- Ensure that this is a private/protected interaction and that the person served is in a safe/private place for the session.
3. Ensure Communication- ask if there are any questions about the device/ platform or process. This is opportunity to identify needs for technical assistance, e.g. hearing aids, headphones etc.
4. Unless using a HIPAA-compliant platform for the telehealth session, explain that the platform used (telephonic, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.) cannot be guaranteed as secure.
5. Document a note in the PS's file that the conversation took place and that the PS acknowledged receiving the information.

Template for Telehealth Mental Health Encounters - Addressing COVID 19

Zakia Alavi, MD - Chief Medical officer, MSHN

DURING THE SESSION & ANYTIME

1. Reassure the PS: Reiterate the capacity to provide treatment is unchanged and that digital/e-platforms for service delivery in health care is a well-established model.
2. Strengthen Reality Testing: By staying informed about the facts, this can strengthen reality testing and may reduce stigma, mitigate guilt and reduce the maladaptive coping skills of Projection, Splitting and Denial.
3. Be prepared: Questions may arise regarding personal experiences using telehealth setting. Telehealth may help the PS with sense of isolation and can improve the patients sense of shared experience.

ENDING THE SESSION

1. Recap regarding COVID19 transmission: Helps with reality resting, may help with feelings of persecution, paranoia and ideas of reference, as well as with primitive defenses like Projection, Displacement, Splitting and obsessive thinking.
2. Reinforce Social Distancing: Helps with coping and good health practice
3. Remind about basic hand washing/best practices: Strengthens healthy coping and improved outcomes
4. Reiterate how we can influence the course of the pandemic together: Addresses hopelessness, reduces fear and empowers individuals.
5. Progress notes: Should be completed after each encounter as would normally be included in PS's file. If the HCP does not have access to the EMR or regular platform for documentation of services, keep the PS's file in a secure location for integration into the EMR/formal record at a future time when possible.