



Telehealth Clinical and Technical Considerations for Mental Health Providers Policy

This policy establishes the clinical and technical guidelines that mental health providers must follow when delivering telehealth services in the state of Oregon, ensuring compliance with OAR 410-120-1200 (Oregon Administrative Rules), Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) standards. Additional reference used Oregon Health Leadership Council's (OHLC's) Telehealth Workgroup publication, "Telehealth Service Recommendations: Clinical Guidance for Outpatient Behavioral Health Providers (January 2023)."

1. Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to outline the necessary clinical and technical standards for mental health providers to deliver high-quality telehealth services while adhering to regulatory and best practice guidelines.
2. Definitions:
 - a. Telehealth: The delivery of mental health services via electronic and telecommunication technologies to clients located at a remote site, as defined by OAR 410-120-1200.
 - b. OAR 410-120-1200: Oregon Administrative Rules governing telehealth services.
 - c. OHA: Oregon Health Authority.
 - d. MHTTC: Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.
3. Telehealth Competency:
 - a. Mental health providers must demonstrate competency in telehealth technologies, including video conferencing, secure messaging, and electronic health records.
 - b. Providers should complete training recommended by OHA and MHTTC, emphasizing compliance with OAR 410-120-1200.

4. Informed Consent:

- a. Providers must obtain informed consent from clients for telehealth services, including a clear explanation of the technology used and the implications of telehealthcare.
- b. Clients should have the option to choose in-person sessions when appropriate and within the bounds of OAR 410-120-1200.

5. Privacy and Security:

- a. Mental health providers must ensure that telehealth interactions adhere to OAR 410-120-1200, and HIPAA privacy and security standards.
- b. Use of secure and encrypted communication platforms is mandatory.

6. Clinical Considerations:

- a. Providers must integrate the principles of the OARS framework, as recommended by OHA into telehealth sessions to facilitate effective communication and therapeutic relationships.
- b. Assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning should be culturally competent and trauma-informed, aligning with MHTTC best practices.

7. Technical Considerations:

- a. Providers are responsible for maintaining a secure and reliable internet connection, using recommended hardware and software for telehealth sessions.
- b. Routine system checks must be performed to address technical issues promptly.

8. Emergency Procedures:

- a. Providers must establish and communicate clear emergency procedures for telehealth sessions, including assessing client safety and connecting them to emergency services, following OHA guidelines.
- b. Clients should be informed of these procedures during the informed consent process.

9. Documentation:

- a. Timely and comprehensive documentation of telehealth sessions is essential, following all legal and ethical standards, as well as MHTTC's documentation recommendations.
- b. Records should include session details, interventions, and client progress.

10. Quality Assurance:

- a. Regular peer supervision, clinical reviews, and adherence to OHA and MHTTC quality assurance guidelines should be part of the telehealth practice to ensure service quality.
- b. Continuous learning and improvement opportunities must be integrated into the provider's practice.

11. Compliance:

- a. Mental health providers must strictly adhere to all relevant federal, state, and local laws, and regulations, including OAR 410-120-1200, and licensing requirements for telehealth services.

12. Review and Updates:

- a. This policy will undergo an annual review to incorporate changes in OHA and MHTTC standards. This policy establishes a framework for mental health providers to deliver telehealth services in accordance with the highest clinical and technical standards, referencing OAR 410-120-1200, OHA, and MHTTC guidelines.