



## Telemedicine Delivery of Mental Health Services

### POLICY:

Lighthouse Child and Family Services offers mental health services via telemedicine delivery. Telemedicine delivery is the delivery of health care or consultations while the patient is at an originating site and the provider is at a distant site. Telemedicine will be provided by real time two-way, interactive audio and visual communications, including secure video conferencing. Telemedicine services will facilitate the patient's assessment, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education and care management.

All telemedicine services comply with the MN State Statutes and Medicaid guidelines for telemedicine or telehealth services. The telehealth video conferencing model allows for the delivery of mental health services when there are barriers that prevent the client(s) and therapist to meet in the same physical location. Using HIPAA compliant video conferencing software, the provider and client(s) can communicate directly via their computers using both audio and visual signals. LCFS offers telehealth services to clients who have a personal computer and high-speed internet connection; and who agree to download the video conferencing software on their computer.

### PROCEDURE:

Safe and effective video conferencing requires that the individual can attend to and communicate with the therapist using a computer screen or mobile device and without having a therapist in the same physical space. The following are some examples of circumstances and conditions that telehealth video conferencing may not be an effective or appropriate therapeutic model and therefore would not be offered:

- To an individual who responds with explosive behaviors
- To an individual who experiences delusions or hallucinations
- To an individual who has been or is suicidal
- To an individual who needs interactive therapy.

LCFS therapists reserve the right to discontinue telehealth video conferencing services if any of the above conditions manifest after telehealth services have begun.



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Given that during telehealth sessions the therapists are not physically present at the location of the client, LCFS requires that there is an identified responsible adult available to provide a local safety net. If at any time during the therapy session, the client exhibits unsafe behavior, the therapist will call the identified person, who has agreed to serve as the safety net. If the identified person does not answer the phone call, the therapist will contact the appropriate local emergency personnel, which may include the local mental health crisis line.

As with face to face therapy, when providing services through video conferencing, the therapist may exchange information with the parent/guardian/identified adult before or after the session that is relevant to the direction or intensity of the therapy session.

When choosing telehealth video conferencing, the client and the parent/guardian will discuss with the therapist the response he or she will take if there is a loss of internet connectivity. If during the session connectivity fails, the therapist will follow established protocol to reconnect with the client.

Telehealth video conferencing services have the same service threshold, authorization requirements and reimbursement rates as services delivered in-person. The client's records will include a statement of the appropriateness and effectiveness of telehealth video conferencing services, the type of services, date and time of services, and location of originating and distant sites. The client's insurance will be billed for the video conferencing session.