

GUIDELINES FOR THE PRACTICE OF TELEPSYCHOLOGY

The delivery of psychological services by remote or electronic means is a rapidly expanding area. While the Board's rules do not prohibit such services, it is important for psychologists to be aware of a number of concerns about the delivery of services via remote or electronic means, including the following:

1. The increased potential that a therapist will have limited knowledge of a distant community's resources in times of crisis.
2. Problems associated with obtaining informed consent.
3. The lack of standards for training providers in the use of technology as well as the special therapeutic considerations in the use of the medium.
4. The lack of vocal, visual, and other sensory cues.
5. The potential that equipment failures may lead to undue patient anxiety particularly in crisis situations.
6. The potential inability of patients in crisis or those unfamiliar with technology to adequately access and use the technology.
7. The lack of confidentiality and privacy.

It is important to remember that the Psychologists' Licensing Act and all other laws affecting the delivery of psychological services apply to all psychological services delivered anywhere within the state of Texas, regardless of how they are delivered.

Complaints received by the Board regarding psychological services delivered through remote or electronic means will be evaluated by the Board on a case-by-case basis, and the following general principles will be applied to any such complaints. However, these guidelines are not intended to conflict with, nor should they be construed to alter requirements for the delivery of services via remote or electronic means that have been established by exempt facilities such as the Veterans Administration.

An individual who is physically located in another state shall be considered to be practicing psychology in Texas and therefore, subject to the Act, if a recipient of psychological services provided by the individual is physically located in the state of Texas. See Board rule 461.10. Licensees should also be aware that services they offer to consumers in other states may similarly be regulated by the laws of the state in which the consumers are located.

The Board currently considers the use of remote or electronic means to deliver psychological services as an "emerging area" as set forth in Board rule 465.9(e). That rule states: "in those emerging areas in which generally recognized standards for preparatory training do not exist, psychologists nevertheless take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect patients, clients, students, research participants, and other affected individuals from the potential for harm." Board rule 465.9(d) requires that licensees who provide services in new areas or involving new techniques do so only after undertaking appropriate study, training, supervision, and/or consultation from persons who are competent in those areas or techniques.

Board rule 465.7 requires licensees who provide psychological services through the internet or other remote or electronic means to provide written notification of their license number and instructions on how to verify the status of a license when obtaining informed consent.

Additionally, Board rule 469.2 requires licensees providing psychological services through the internet to display an image of the Board's complaint notice in a prominent and easily accessible location on the licensee's website.

It is important for licensees considering such services to review the characteristics of the services, the service delivery method, and the provisions for confidentiality to ensure compliance with the Board's rules, as well as federal and state law. Licensees are also encouraged to review the [*Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology*](#) published by the American Psychological Association, and incorporate those best practices where congruent with federal and state law.

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