



Due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, face-to-face support is no longer a viable option for the delivery of non-medical counseling in many areas. Accordingly, Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC) and Child and Youth Behavioral MFLCs (CYB-MFLC) are now able to temporarily provide telehealth services through telephonic and video platforms, ensuring continuity of care to our military community.

As we introduce telehealth, here is an overview of procedures and instructions for adherence:

### **Telehealth Site Selection**

Telehealth will be temporarily implemented as a delivery method for non-medical counseling in areas where traditional face-to-face counseling is restricted during COVID-19 containment efforts. Determination of telehealth sites will be based on select impacted unique numerical identifiers (UNIs) and authorized through the OSD program office. Telehealth will not be a substitute for face-to-face services when installations and locations are operating or not restricted.

### **Data Collection**

Session demographics will continue to be reported on the activity forms. Activity forms will be updated to include subcategories of telephonic and video for face-to-face interactions. For reporting requirements, an additional data element has been included in the data dictionary in order to capture the delivery of the counseling session by type of modality. This new data element is to be included on the MFLC Activity Form and submitted as an additional data field/column in the raw data. Specifically, when the MFLC currently conducts a counseling session, then the MFLC Activity Form indicates “CONFIRM\_F2FNMC” as “Yes.” When “CONFIRM\_F2FNMC” is “Yes”, then additional information must be completed to identify the modality. This new data element is titled “TYPE\_FTFNMC” and requires the MFLC to select the modality as “In Person,” “Telephonic” or “Video.” These three modality selections are described as:

- 1) In Person: counseling session conducted in the presence of a counselor
- 2) Telephonic: counseling session conducted by telephone
- 3) Video: counseling session conducted using video conferencing

### **Training**

Contractors will ensure that MFLCs are provided telehealth specific training emphasizing the nuances of therapy via technology verses in person services. Training will include but is not limited to:

- a. Professional conduct for telehealth (i.e. environment, privacy, dress, ethics)

- b. Developing the therapeutic relationship via technology (i.e. body language, emphasis on empathy, listening, tone)
- c. Minimizing Distraction from technology (i.e. managing frozen screens, echoing, low-resolution video feeds, and dropped calls)
- d. Duty to Warn/Mandated Reporting

Contractors will ensure all MFLCs are in compliance with training, credentialing, and are aware of the legal and ethical obligation of telehealth. Compliance includes but is not limited to licensure status, malpractice insurance, HIPPA and ethics training. Clinicians are bound by the statutes of their state of practice and currently interstate telehealth is *not* authorized.

### **Duty-to-Warn and Mandated Reporting**

During telehealth sessions, MFLCs may identify potential risks and determine that a participant falls within the Duty-to-Warn and Mandated Reporting (DTW/MR) category. Contractors will ensure that MFLCs are trained on specific requirements to address imminent risk, reporting requirements and maintain an up-to-date resource and POC list. If there is a DTW/MR situation, the MFLC will contact the local authorities or utilize a friend or other adult physically present to assist with a warm hand-off for out of scope presentations.

When connecting with emergency services, the MFLC will make the call from another phone while the participant is still connected via videoconference or telephone. If no one is with the participant, the MFLC will discuss emergency services options with the participant and dispatch the police or emergency personnel to the participant's home. The MFLC will obtain the contact information of the police or emergency personnel to ensure the participant arrived at the designated location.

If there is another adult physically present with the participant, the MFLC will ask the participant to bring the individual in the video session or join the call to conduct a virtual handoff. If the adult is willing to transport the participant to the hospital or emergency services, the MFLC will obtain the contact information of the individual providing the transportation and provide the location of the hospital or clinic. The MFLC will follow up with the individual providing transportation to ensure the participant arrived at the prescribed location.

Once the participant is in transport, the MFLC will contact their supervisor to provide an update and debrief if warranted. Once the participant is connected with services, the MFLC will contact the designated installation POCs as per established protocol and complete the activity form. All collected information to include the participant's name and contact information will be destroyed.

### **Technology**

Telehealth services will be provided via HIPAA compliant telehealth platforms with approval from the OSD program office. Please refer to your respective vendor for specific guidelines regarding implementation.

## **Informed Consent**

Prior to the initiation of a sessions, the MFLC will collect the participant's location/address and contact number in case of disconnection or DTW/MR. If the participant refuses, the MFLC will inform the participant that the session will be terminated and provided a referral to Military OneSource or resources that align to the desired level of anonymity.

Telehealth sessions involving youth ages 6 to 17 will be conducted by video technology only. Telehealth sessions involving youth ages 6 to 12 years of age will be conducted in a family session only. Telehealth sessions for youth ages 13 to 17 must have a parent/guardian available at the start of each video session to give parental consent and maintain line of sight for the duration of the session. Telehealth may not be appropriate for children under the age of five. Services can be provided to the parent or guardian to address any parenting issues or additional concerns.

The Telework Statement of Consent will be read to the participant after the Limits of Confidentiality at each session. MFLCs will require a vocal acknowledgement from the participant:

*In response to COVID-19, I am authorized to provide telehealth services to participants in areas where face-to-face sessions are not available. Please acknowledge understanding and consent to the following:*

- 1. Telehealth is the practice of delivering non-medical counseling services via technology assisted media or other electronic means between the MFLC and participant who are located in two different locations.*
- 2. It is recommended that during video session, your device is connected to WIFI to avoid carrier data charges that may apply.*
- 3. There are risks associated with telehealth services to include technological disturbances due to transmission failure, interruptions or breaches in confidentiality and limited ability to respond in emergencies.*
- 4. All privacy laws will apply during telehealth sessions and communications will not be recorded by either party.*
- 5. Information exchanged during the sessions will be confidential and not disclosed to unauthorized personnel except when there is a requirement for a duty to warn or mandated reporting as explained in the limits of confidentiality.*
- 6. Individual video non-medical counseling sessions for minors age 13 to 17 must have a parent/guardian available at the start of each video session to give parental consent and maintain line of sight for the duration of the session.*
- 7. Family video non-medical counseling sessions are offered for minors 6 to 12 years of age and a parent/guardian must attend each session.*
- 8. If technical difficulties occur during video sessions resulting in service interruptions, please restart or reconnect to the session. If we are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_ to continue telephonically or to discuss re-scheduling.*
- 9. You have the right to withdraw consent at any time and referrals can be provided to services such as the Behavioral Health, Chaplin's office and Military OneSource who may provide face-to-face service.*

*Do you understand and consent to the use of telehealth services?*

Please contact the program office for any clarification or questions related to telehealth services.

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