



Addendum

**Client Information and Policy Statement for Electronic Sessions and Services
("E-counseling, Texting and Email)**

Purpose and benefits of electronic sessions:

- The intention of electronic services will be to increase access of mental health services and quality of care in situations where the client may not be able to make a physical appearance in the counseling office due to illness, lack of transportation or being out of town etc. but will still may want/need to make or keep an appointment with a therapist or schedule sessions when not available via phone due to work, etc.
- In many cases, there are reasonable alternatives that will allow a client to physically meet face to face with a qualified therapist. For example, many counties will have programs available to assist with transportation, to provide in-home treatment, etc. Your counselor will discuss possible alternatives with you to establish the best option for you.
- To gain a full, thorough assessment, you will be required to have an initial face to face session, if possible.

Limits with electronic sessions and services:

- A large part of therapy is based on the relationship we have with our clients. Certain nuances such as facial expressions, vocal signals, body language and some context information can be limited when sessions and contact are not conducted in person. This can make a broader understanding of what is being communicated more difficult.
- Sometimes, technology can be unreliable as in a power outage, equipment breakdown, etc. These issues can cause a barrier that could potentially interrupt or prevent the session from being conducted. In the event of this disruption, your counselor will attempt to contact you by alternative means to communicate the problem and arrange another session. If contact by alternative means is not possible, your counselor will contact you as soon as it becomes possible. If the disruption occurs on your end, we ask that you follow the same protocol.
- The scope of treatment may be limited with E-counseling especially for child/play therapy, family therapy and certain types of mental illness.
- Your therapist cannot respond to a crisis where you may need hospitalization and/or intense support while engaging in electronic sessions. E-counseling is not intended for those clients who suffer with serious mental illness, who are suicidal or need intense support.
- Response time for any electronic service is not guaranteed and should not be used in case of emergency. Response time depends upon the counselor's caseload and work hours. It could take up to 72 hours for a response (or more if the counselor is on vacation or out of the office).
- Texting is not typically used by the counselors at Arbor. However, on occasion, your counselor may choose to use this medium for scheduling purposes only through our recommended app. Any disclosure of personal information should be done through a more secure platform. Email is **strongly** encouraged over texting for greater security.

Limits to Confidentiality:

- The release of confidential materials is the same for electronic services as it is in person. (Please see our Policy Statement for additional information. This can be found online at www.arborcounseling.org)
- The client's session can be considered confidential to the limits of the media tool. There is not additional encryption beyond the product's instrument.
- Personal confidentiality in the client's space is the responsibility of the client. The therapist has little control over the environment that you choose to conduct your session.

- You and your counselor will set up a pass phrase or code upon verification of your identity at the initial session. From that point on, you will be required to give this code prior to receiving any response.

Apps and Programs:

- You will be required to use the following platforms is engaging in electronic contact with Arbor Counseling.
- For email: Our email is secure and will come to you in the normal manner as long as communication is maintained with an arborcounseling.org address.
- For video sessions: You will be required to download a program called **V-See**. Your counselor will send you a link to begin. It has end to end encryption, unlike other popular programs such as Facetime, Skype, etc.
- For texting: You will be asked to download **Google Hangouts**. This program is secure as long as both users are using the messenger feature through the arborcounseling.org domain. Otherwise, your messages may be subjected to viewing by third parties. **Note: video calls and SMS messages are not secure and will not be used.**

Informed Consent and Fees:

- We aim to provide the most secure platforms possible. However, you must be aware that no form of electronic contact is guaranteed to be 100% secure despite our attempt at security. You assume this risk by initiating or responding to an electronic message.
- Your counselor is only licensed to provide services within the State of Ohio. Services cannot be provided if you are located in a different state unless legal authorizations have been made by your counselor. It your job to disclose your location when services are being provided.
- Any electronic sessions or contact can only occur after the client has signed and returned the Client Information and Policy Statement including this addendum, a signed acknowledgement of the counselor's Professional Disclosure Statement and signed arrangements for session fees.
- Some insurance companies may not pay for phone sessions and/or video conferencing. It is the client's responsibility to be aware of the limits of their payer source and the client's ultimate financial responsibility for the session.
- Session rates will be billed at Arbor Counseling's standard rates prorated to time spent in session. Additionally, you will be billed for significant reading or response time that exceeds 10 minutes via any electronic platform. Please see the Client Information and Policy Statement for a full description.
- Your portion of the payment will be expected at each session. Your counselor can take a credit card payment when speaking with you or you may choose to pay online or keep a credit card on file. If choosing to pay by check, your payment will be expected within 7 days of the session. Checks can be made payable to Arbor Counseling.

Expiration: (when this authorization will end)

This authorization will expire (Check ONLY ONE box):

When I revoke this authorization Conclusion of therapy

Upon the following date, event or condition: _____

Note: You have the right to revoke this authorization, in writing, at any time by sending such written information to our office. However, your revocation will not be effective to the extent that we have taken action in reliance on the authorization or if this authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage and the insurer has a legal right to contest a claim.

Client Signature: By signing below, I acknowledge that I am fully aware of the benefits and the limitations of electronic therapy sessions. By signing below, I am consenting to be treated, in whole or in part, in the electronic format as stated above and agreed upon by my therapist.

Client or Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date
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Printed Name

Arbor Witness:	Date
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Printed Name

