**Marshall University Counseling Center**

**Telemental Health Emergency Response Plan**

Dear Students,

Due to the increase of **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** outbreak and associated impacts and responses occurring around the world, and Marshall University’s response, it is necessary for the Marshall University Counseling Center to put a response plan in place. In the days and weeks ahead, our University will continue to communicate with us, and we ask you keep up with all Marshall University Communications concerning the Coronavirus.

**Marshall University is OPEN.** Although access to most buildings and offices are restricted to provide appropriate physical distancing for students and employees, the Counseling Center staff are still available by phone, video sessions, and e-mail.

To schedule an appointment M-F, 8:00-5:00, please contact us at **304-696-3111 or e-mail counselingcenter@marshall.edu.** You can also schedule an appt. by completing a referral form on our website: [www.marshall.edu/counseling/forms](http://www.marshall.edu/counseling/forms)

**If this is an emergency, please contact 911 or MUPD immediately at**

**304-696-HELP (4357). You can also reach the on-call counselor at 304-972-1274.**

To contact a counselor after hours (after 5:00 p.m. or weekends) contact the following number: 304-972-1274.

For updates from the Counseling Center on our services and available resources during COVID-19, please visit the following link for information: <https://www.marshall.edu/counseling/counseling-information/coronavirus-covid-19-response-plan-and-resources/>

Currently, prevention is the best defense.  It is highly encouraged for us to take all of the precautions necessary in this developing situation provided by the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization and local health departments, including:

* Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the restroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
* Using an alcohol-based sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).
* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
* Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects.
* The CDC is not recommending that the public wear a mask for protection at this time. Rather, the US Surgeon General is asking the public to refrain from purchasing masks to reserve these for healthcare workers and those infected with the virus.

**Telemental Health/Distance Counseling Services will be provided in the following ways;**

1. **Synchronous:** Counseling services where the counselor and the student participate in counseling at the same time
   1. Phone Counseling Sessions
   2. Video Conferencing Sessions
2. **Asynchronous:** Counseling services that are delivered and received at different times. This may include messaging via e-mail about current functioning, mood and other mental health factors.
   1. Message exchanges via e-mail (please keep in mind this is not completely confidential). You must verify your 901 number and date of birth for e-mail exchanges with a counselor in the event of distance counseling or for
3. **Online Mental Health Support**
   1. Online screenings and assessment tools on the Counseling Center Website:
      1. ULifeline
      2. eCheckUp to Go
   2. Apps for mental health (available on the Counseling Center website-https://www.marshall.edu/counseling/resource-information

**Security**

The Marshall University Counseling Center has protocols in place to verify the identity of the student for each telemental health/ distance counseling session. Students’ identity must be verified prior to engaging in confidential services. All sessions will be password protected and set to your 901 number.

**Confidentiality and Privacy**

The Marshall University Counseling Center utilizes multiple measures to ensure client’s confidentiality and privacy during distance counseling sessions by the counselor (sessions with a closed door, no one present in the office besides the counselor, distance counseling sessions are not saved or recorded). The Marshall University Counseling Center would like to point out measures that the student should take to ensure confidentiality and privacy from their end. Examples include:

* Conduct the sessions in a private location where others cannot hear you.
* Using secure video conferencing technology. *The Marshall University Counseling Center uses Zoom, a HIPAA compliant application.*
* Do not record any sessions*. The Marshall University Counseling Center’s HIPAA compliant Zoom application does not allow recording of sessions. If your Zoom meeting has a record option, please notify the counselor immediately.*
* Password protect your computer, tablet, phone, and any other device with a password that is unique.
* Always log out of your sessions.
* Do not have any software remember your password. Sign in every time.
* Do not share your passwords with anyone.
* Do not share your computer when you are logon to any counseling software.
* If you wish to avoid others knowing that you are receiving counseling services, clear your browser’s cache (browsing history), and on your phone, list your therapist by a name rather that as “counselor or therapist”.
* Have all of your devices set to time out requiring you to sign back in after a set idle time.
* Keep your computer updated.
* Use a firewall and antivirus program.
* When online do not login as an administrator.
* Router / Access Point
  + Only use a secure network for internet access using a WAP2 security key.
  + Use your own administer ID and password (not the default) for your router or access point.
  + Choose a custom SSID name, not the default name.
  + Limit the range of your Wi-Fi by positioning it near the center of your home.
* Notify your counselor if you suspect any breach in your security.

**Benefits to Telemental Health/ Distance Counseling**

* Increase access (disabilities, transportation issues, weather, illness, or emergencies)
* Convenience regarding scheduling, travel time, etc
* Cost savings (e.g. cuts out travel costs, childcare, time off work)
* Barrier removal, including those with dx such as PTSD or social anxiety
* Reduced perceived stigma (not being seen
* Authenticity of emotional expression: online disinhibition effect – more likely to share more intense or authentic emotion when at a distance
* Effectiveness literature indicates effectiveness, and body of literature growing
* Client empowerment: clients can feel sense of control
* Social Justice: removal of barriers creates more equitable access for students
* Increases clinical capacity: by using multiple tele-mental health services, can increase number of students served and seeking services (which can also lead to limitations to ability to serve the demand)

**Limitations of Telemental Health Services**

* Confidentiality is greatest concern
  + Instruct clients about how to maintain their own confidentiality, including where they may want to be during their sessions (not in a public location) and being mindful that no one else is in the room that should not be in the room
* Interception of sensitive data/data breeches: meeting current data encryption standards and data security measures; asynchronous services, such as messaging could be at risk for others seeing
* Keeping pace with ethical codes and best practices
* Limited literature on TMH effectiveness
* Inability to see communication in context, including non-verbal communication; may have to instruct client on how to create the best atmosphere for the most effective session
* Service disruption due to technical issues, power outages, challenges with internet connections; identify back-up plans
* Credentialing and training is essential
* Administering assessments can be challenging online if it hasn’t been created for online delivery
* Ensure malpractice insurance covers TMH
* Lack of technical infrastructure- ensure hardware, software, and human resources are available to provide services in effective, legal, ethical manner
* Crisis intervention must be planned in advance
* HIPAA compliance is required; clients may not waive rights to HIPAA with non-compliant service delivery platforms

**New Appointments/Intakes**

The Counseling Center will still take new intake appointments. To schedule an appointment or make a referral please call **304-696-3111** or e-mail **counselingcenter@marshall.edu** and the Center Receptionist will assist you. You can also complete a referral form online at: <https://www.marshall.edu/counseling/counseling-center-referral-form/>

**Emergency/Crisis**

If there is suicidal ideation, intent and/or plan, and you are at home and away from campus, please call 911 or visit your local emergency room. If you are on campus, please contact MUPD at **304-696-HELP (4357).** You can also contact the on-call counselor **at 304-972-1274.** For the safety and health of counseling center staff, emergency and crisis on-call services will still be provided, but staff will not be transporting students to local emergency rooms and will not be going to hospital emergency rooms with students. Counseling Center Staff will contact 911 for an Emergency Medical Technician for transports, and may contact emergency contacts if necessary. Mountain Health Hospitals, which includes Cabell-Huntington Hospital and St. Mary’s Hospital, has implemented a no visitor policy due to the Coronavirus. To reach the counselor on-call, please contact 304-972-1274.

**Please note: If you tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19), or someone you have come in close contact with has tested positive, or someone you have come in contact with that shows symptoms consistent with Coronavirus (COVID-19), then we will be required to break confidentiality and we will report this to the Huntington Health Department and the Marshall University Coronavirus Task Force.**

**Legal/Ethical Issues: State of West Virginia**

The Marshall University Counseling Center adheres to all ethical guidelines set forth by the American Counseling Association, National Association of Social Workers, as well as the West Virginia Board of Examiners in Counseling and the West Virginia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. All include sections and discussion about Telemental/Distance Counseling in their Code of Ethics. You may them at the following websites:

American Counseling Association: <https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

National Association of Social Workers: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

**Please note: This plan is subject to change based upon University communications from President Dr. Gilbert, Director of Safety, Tracy Smith, as well as Federal and State communications.**