



## **University Counseling Services Telehealth Counseling Information about Distance Counseling Services**

We are pleased to have the opportunity to serve you. University Counseling Services is a voluntary confidential counseling support for currently enrolled students.

### **Distance Counseling**

University Counseling Services offers distance counseling via telephone or face-to-face video conferencing to currently enrolled TSU students who meet the eligibility criteria for distance counseling services. This service is available to clients assessed as being appropriate for this form of counseling.

Prior to beginning distance counseling, you will have an initial video consultation with a University Counseling Services staff member in order to verify your identity by matching you with your picture ID. During this initial verification, you will choose a passphrase or number, which you will use for all future sessions. This process protects you from another person posing as you. Video communication may lack some visual or audio cues that on occasion may result in misunderstanding. Should this ever happen, it is important to assume that your counselor has positive regard for you, and to check out your assumptions with your counselor. This will reduce any unnecessary feelings of discomfort.

**Video conferencing counseling sessions are held via Zoom, a HIPAA compatible video conferencing platform. It is recommended that you sign on to your account at least 5 minutes prior to your session start time. You are responsible for initiating the connection with University Counseling Services via the provided software link at the time of your session.**

### **Limitations of Distance counseling**

Distance counseling should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face counseling or medication by a physician. It is an alternative form of counseling with some differences from traditional counseling. For example:

- Due to the use of technology, video counseling may have disruptions in service and quality of service.
- If you are having a crisis, acute psychosis, or suicidal or homicidal thoughts, video counseling might not be appropriate for you needs.

### **Emergency Management for Distance Counseling**

So TSU Counseling Services is able to get you help in the case of an emergency and for your safety, the following measures are important and necessary:

- Your counselor will need to know the location/address in which you will consistently be during counseling sessions, and will need to know if this location changes.
- Your counselor will request that you identify someone, whom you trust, to give your counselor permission to contact should a situation occur that your counselor believes you

Adapted from The University of Alabama at Birmingham UAB Counseling Services Telemental Health Emergency Operations Plan (March, 2020).

to be at risk. You, and/or your counselor, will verify that this emergency contact person is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and if your counselor deems necessary, call 911 and/or transport you to a hospital.

### **Backup Plan in Case of Technology Failure**

- The most reliable backup is a phone. Therefore, it is recommended that you always have a phone available, and that you provide your counselor with your phone number.
- If you get disconnected from a video conferencing session, re-start the session. If you are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, please call your counselor.

### **Scope of Service and Eligibility**

TSU Counseling Services provides services for all eligible students. If it is determined by the clinical staff that an individual's needs exceed the scope of service or expertise available at TSU Counseling Services or that your needs cannot be adequately met by participating in distance counseling, we will assist you to identify an appropriate referral to meet your needs. TSU Counseling Services does not pay the costs of therapy or community resources/treatment services to which you may be referred.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality with distance counseling or telehealth counseling adheres to federal and state laws and ethical standards just as with in-person delivery. Information that you share will be within the context of the therapeutic relationship and will remain between the client/student and their counselor/director/supervisor. **Your written permission is required** before any information about your contact with the Counseling Center is released to parents, faculty, staff, etc. or any outside agencies, within legal and ethical boundaries. Each client/student has a right to privacy. Video conferencing sessions in our office are provided behind a closed door. All video conferencing correspondences will be done through Zoom, which is encrypted to the federal standard.

To schedule a pre-screening consultation appointment or for questions email us at [counseling@tnstate.edu](mailto:counseling@tnstate.edu) or give us a call at 615.963.5611. For more information about our services and for additional resources [www.tnstate.edu/counseling](http://www.tnstate.edu/counseling).