Information about Tele-Mental Health Counseling Services

We are pleased to have the opportunity to serve you. University Counseling and Testing Center (UCTC) is a voluntary, confidential counseling support for currently enrolled students.

Telehealth Counseling

UCTC offers telehealth counseling via telephone or face-to-face video conferencing to currently enrolled USA students who meet the eligibility criteria for telehealth counseling services. This service is available only to students that UCTC staff has assessed and initially determined as requiring services that, in UCTC's sole discretion, can be appropriately delivered via telehealth methods.

Prior to beginning tele-mental health counseling, you will have an initial phone consultation with a UCTC staff member in order to review eligibility criteria. During the phone consultation, your counselor will discuss several security measures for future tele-mental health sessions with UCTC. By taking these measures, among others, UCTC aims to prevent others from posing as you or otherwise gaining access to your confidential records or information.

Please be aware that telehealth counseling may lack some visual or audio cues that on occasion may result in misunderstanding between you and your UCTC mental health provider. Should this ever happen, it is important to remember that your UCTC mental health provider has positive regard for you, and UCTC recommends you directly address any possible misunderstanding with your UCTC mental health provider to reduce any unnecessary feelings of discomfort.

Video conferencing counseling sessions are held using an encrypted video conferencing software. It is recommended that you sign on to your account at least five (5) minutes prior to your session's start time. You are responsible for initiating the connection at the time of your session using the UCTC-provided software link.

Limitations of Telehealth Counseling

Telehealth 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 face-to-face counseling. For example:

- Due to the use of technology, phone or video counseling may have disruptions in service and quality of service.

- If you are having a crisis, acute psychosis, or suicidal or homicidal thoughts, phone or video counseling might not be appropriate for your needs.

Information about Tele-Mental Health Counseling Services

For additional limitations and risks associated with telehealth services, generally, please refer to the *UCTC Supplemental Telehealth Informed Consent* form, which will be available on the student web portal under *Forms*. The *UCTC Supplemental Telehealth Informed Consent* form must be reviewed and signed prior to engaging in UCTC tele-mental health services.

Emergency Management for Telehealth counseling

From time to time, situations may arise within the context of telehealth counseling in which UCTC may need to take action to get you help in the case of an emergency or for your safety. For that reason, UCTC requires the following from all tele-mental health counseling participants:

- Your UCTC mental health provider will need to know the location/address at which you will be regularly receiving UCTC telehealth counseling sessions. If this location/address changes, UCTC asks that you provide the new location/address to your UCTC mental health provider.

- Your UCTC mental health provider will request that you identify someone that UCTC may contact with your permission in the event that your UCTC mental health provider believes you to be at risk or imminent danger. You, and/or your UCTC mental health provider, will verify that the person you designate is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and if your UCTC mental health provider deems necessary, call 911 and/or transport you to a hospital.

Backup Plan in Case of Technology Failure

If you experience a video conferencing failure during your telehealth counseling session, first attempt to re-start the session. If you are unable to reconnect within ten (10) minutes, please have a phone available on which you may call your UCTC mental health provider directly. UCTC also recommends that you provide your UCTC mental health provider with your phone number, as well.

Scope of Service and Eligibility

UCTC provides services for all eligible students, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, genetic information, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other legally protected status. If it is determined by UCTC's staff, in its sole discretion, that your needs exceed the scope of service or expertise available at the UCTC or that your needs cannot be adequately met by participating in telehealth counseling, UCTC will assist you to identify an appropriate referral to meet your needs. UCTC does not pay the costs of therapy or community resources/treatment services to which you may be referred.

Information about Tele-Mental Health Counseling Services

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to your counseling progress. UCTC's counselors are licensed master's level or higher mental health professionals and graduate students in training who are ethically and legally bound to maintain your confidentiality. A written and/or electronic record (date, time, nature of meeting) of your contacts with the UCTC will be maintained in a secure manner in accordance with applicable Federal law. Video conferencing sessions are provided behind a closed door using encrypted video conferencing software.

For additional information on the treatment and disclosure of your personal information and clinical treatment record, generally, please refer to the *UCTC Supplemental Telehealth Informed Consent* form.

To schedule a consultation appointment or for questions, give us a call at (251) 460-7051. For more information about our services and for additional resources, visit https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/counseling .