



ABC of NC

ABC of NC Child Development Center Telebehavioral Health and Educational Services

Informed Consent

This Informed Consent is for Telebehavioral health and educational services and contains important information focusing on ABC of NC's services using electronic devices and the internet. Please read this carefully, and contact Darlene.Steele@abcofnc.org with any questions. When the legal guardian signs this document, it will represent an agreement between the client and ABC of NC.

A telebehavioral health platform is an electronic software that allows clients and clinicians to communicate, when they are not in the same physical location, by transmitting audio and visual information over the internet in real time.

It is important to recognize the benefits and limitations/risks of telebehavioral health services:

Potential Benefits of Telebehavioral Health and Educational Services

When clients cannot attend in-person sessions at ABC of NC, the telebehavioral health platform may be an option for clients to receive services from their clinicians. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician moves to a different location in the state, takes an extended in-state vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. Telebehavioral health, however, requires both parties to have technical competence in order to be helpful. Although there are benefits, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telebehavioral health.

Potential Risks Associated with Telebehavioral Health and Educational Services

Risks to Confidentiality: ABC of NC will take reasonable steps to ensure the client's privacy. Because services may take place outside of ABC of NC's office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if the client is not in a private place during sessions. It is important for the client to find a private place for services/sessions where they will not be interrupted - free of distractions (including cell phone or other devices). It is also important for the client to protect the privacy of sessions on cell phones or other devices. The client should participate in services while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.

Crisis Management and Intervention: Usually, ABC of NC will not engage in telebehavioral health services and/or educational services with individuals who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. ABC of NC may not be able to provide services necessary in an urgent or emergency situation.

Efficacy: Most research shows that telebehavioral health can be effective for ABA therapy services (especially parent/caregiver training and technician training, supervision, and support) as well as counseling and psychotherapy. However, some clinicians believe that something may be lost by not being in the same room. For example, there are concerns about a clinician's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely and increased opportunities for miscommunication.

Emergencies with Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telebehavioral health than in traditional in-person therapy.

Backup plan in the event of technical problems occur: if the services are interrupted and the client is not having an emergency, the client should disconnect from the telehealth session and the provider will wait one (1) minute and then re-contact via the telebehavioral health platform on which we agreed to conduct services.

To address some of these difficulties, the provider will verify the client's current location before telehealth services begin, identify an emergency contact person in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing the situation, confirm best contact information for the client, and give the client their phone # in the event the session is disconnected.

Emergency Response Plan

If the services are interrupted because the client is having an emergency, the client should not call the provider back. Instead, the client should call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room. If the client is having a behavioral crisis that could be addressed by a mobile crisis team, the provider will provide contact information to the client for mobile crisis in the area. In either case, the provider will follow up with the client by phone within the next 24 hours.

Alternatives to the Use of a Telehealth Platform

Clients who do not want to use our telebehavioral health platform for services may receive in-person services at the offices of ABC of NC and/or put services on hold until they are available.

Electronic Communication

The client may have to have certain webcam, computer, tablet, or smartphone systems to use telebehavioral health services. The client is solely responsible for any cost to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telebehavioral health services.

ABC of NC will communicate between services/sessions by phone, email, and text message with the client's permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with ABC of NC should be limited to administrative matters. This includes setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. The client should be aware that ABC of NC cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by text. Therefore, we will not discuss any clinical information by text and prefer that the client does not either.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur in-person and by our telehealth services. However, if an urgent issue arises, the client should feel free to attempt to reach the outpatient clinic therapy after-hours phone number 743-333-8603 and for ABA therapy call 336-276-3754.

Confidentiality

ABC of NC has a legal and ethical responsibility to make our best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telebehavioral health and educational services. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that we cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. ABC of NC uses updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep client information private, but there is a risk that electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others, including from the client's internet infrastructure. Clients should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, for telebehavioral health sessions, only using secure networks, avoid public/free Wi-Fi, and use passwords to protect the device being used).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that are outlined in ABC of NC's general Informed Consent document still apply to our telebehavioral health services. The client should contact ABC of NC with any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telebehavioral Health and Educational Services

ABC of NC will let the client know if the provider determines that telebehavioral health is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for the client. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person services, parent/caregiver training, parent/caregiver classes, and, if possible, or referrals to another professional.

Records: ABC of NC's telebehavioral health services shall not be video and/or audio recorded in anyway unless agreed to by both parties. We will maintain documentation of our sessions in the same way we document session's in-person in accordance with our policies, codes of ethics, and laws.

Fees: The same fee rates will apply for telebehavioral health services as apply for in-person services. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via electronic devices. If the client's insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic services, the client will be solely responsible for the entire fee of services. The client should contact their insurance company prior to engaging in telebehavioral health services in order to determine whether these services will be covered. If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, the client will only be charged the prorated amount of actual service/session time.