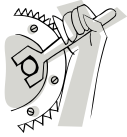


LESSON 1

DISTANCE CREDENTIALLED COUNSELOR WORK SETTINGS



Mental Health Counselors understand how to discuss with both colleagues and clients the various delivery models, work settings, opportunities, advantages, challenges and professional preparation involved in the delivery of Distance Counseling services within their own specialty areas.

TYPES OF WORK SETTINGS THAT MAY UTILIZE DISTANCE COUNSELING

- Career Counseling Centers
- College Alumni Centers
- College Counseling Centers
- Mental Health Centers (particularly rural centers)
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Rehabilitation Programs
- E-therapy Clinics
- Hospitals & Psychiatric Hospitals

TYPES OF DEGREES THAT MAY UTILIZE DISTANCE COUNSELING



- M.D. Medical Doctor: Psychiatrist (prescribes medication)
- Ph.D/Psy.D. Psychologist (Clinical, Counseling, Social, Applied, Organizational)
- M.A. Master of Arts
- M.S. Master of Science
- M.Ed. Master of Education
- M.S.W. Master of Social Work
- B.S.W. Bachelor of Social Work
- ...and the list continues to grow. The trend now is “Distance Services” which can be delivered by many different services.



<http://psychcentral.com/diff.htm>: This website offers a great summary of the various distinctions between therapist degrees.

DEFINE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE:

It should be noted that international guidelines and laws regarding who can practice certain disciplines vary. In addition, within the United States, there may be variations regarding certification and licensure. The explanation that follows offers a generalized approach.

- **Certification** implies a level of education beyond that required to obtain a degree. Certification indicates proficiency in within a certain area of practice or Study. Certification can be granted by institutional, governmental or private settings.
- **Licensure** is generally governed by states or regions and grants the mental health professional the ability to practice counseling, psychotherapy and/or evaluation. Full licensure implies the ability to practice “independently” within a certain jurisdiction.

MOST COMMON AND RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATIONS AMONG MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- NCC National Certified Counselor
- CRC Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
- CEAP Certified Employee Assistance Provider
- CAC Certified Addictions Counselor
- MAC Master Addictions Counselor
- CCM Certified Case Manager
- ACS Approved Clinical Supervisor
- DCC Distance Credentialed Counselor
- BCC Board Certified Coach

MOST COMMON AND RECOGNIZED LICENSES AMONG MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- Licensed Psychologist
- Licensed Mental Health Counselor
- Licensed Professional Counselor
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor
- Certified Addictions Counselor (state regulated; similar to license)
- Psychiatrist (Medical Doctor)

Several other certifications exist and are offered by various institutions and settings. For a more thorough list of certifications, review the following link.



Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mental-health-providers/MY01650>

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION/TRAINING, WORK SETTING AND CLIENT POPULATION WHEN DELIVERING DISTANCE COUNSELING SERVICES

- Education & degree
- Specialty area(s)
- Experience
- Certifications, licenses, credentials



<http://www.counselingseattle.com/initials.htm>: This is an excellent list of acronyms used in the mental health field, including licenses and credentials.

HOW DOES THE COUNSELOR'S EMPLOYMENT SETTING INFLUENCE SERVICE DELIVERY?

- Education
- Hospital
- Agency
- Corporate
- Private Practice



Questions to consider:

- ❖ Do you or your colleagues ever email clients about their next appointment time or other housekeeping issues? Do you or your colleagues use a cell phone for the same purpose?
- ❖ Does your work setting casually encourage the use of email, chat or cell phone to discuss treatment plans or client outcomes?
- ❖ Does it seem unreasonable that a counselor or psychologist who routinely conducts evaluations, might rely on email to obtain case file information from child welfare, other agencies or collateral sources?
- ❖ Did any questions about confidentiality come to mind as you read the questions above?

ORGANIZATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS



- Educational and Institutional settings:
- Private Practice:
- Not-for-profit:

EVOLVING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- Organizational/institutional environments and needs
- Distance learners and related student services:
- Collaborative efforts of government and private sector:
- Private practitioners:



Begin thinking about how you would implement distance counseling into your work setting.

LESSON 2

HISTORY AND CURRENT RESEARCH



Mental Health Counselors understand how to identify and discuss current research/resource that informs Distance Counseling.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT AND RESEARCH

What is the history/timeline of past practices that join technology with counseling? Following is a time line and a brief history (Anthony & Nagel, 2010) of technology-assisted guidance, counseling, therapy.

1966 [Eliza](#)

1970 [Plato/Morton](#)

1972 [Eliza and Parry](#)

1986 [Dear Uncle Ezra](#)

1991 [Psychcentral](#)

1992 First Online Mental Health Counselors

1993 Free Mental Health advice online

1994 [Samaritans](#)

1997 [International Society for Mental Health Online](#)

2002 500 Distance Counselors Online

2004 [Distance Credentialed Counselor](#)

2008 [Online Therapy Institute](#)

2014 Distance Counseling is approaching mainstream



As you can see from the time line, the movement of distance counseling is from technology-enhanced to technology-assisted counseling and psychotherapy. The revolutionary aspect to Distance Counseling practices today is the use of technology as the actual

communication delivery system for the counseling to take place as opposed to an ancillary support vehicle.

E-THERAPY CONCEPTUALIZED

What is the definition of e-therapy/online counseling and how did that definition come to be?

Definition of E-therapy

Metanoia.org



CURRENT LITERATURE, RESEARCH AND RESOURCES



Azy Barak, Ph.D. offers the most comprehensive bibliography available about mental health and technology. The [INDEX](#) offers several topics. Within the list of topics is the bibliography of research regarding [Internet-Assisted Therapy & Counseling](#). Take a minute to peruse this comprehensive listing of articles and book chapters on the topic of distance counseling. The Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development, Florida State University also offers a comprehensive [Distance Counseling Bibliography](#) with updated bibliographies available at the website: <http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/>.



The ISMHO case study group offers anecdotal yet convincing information in case study form about online therapy. This group is no longer active but archives of their findings can be found on the [ISMHO website](#). Particular attention should be paid to [Myths & Realities of Online Clinical Work: Observations on the phenomena of online behavior, experience and therapeutic relationships. A 3rd-Year Report from ISMHO's Clinical Case Study Group](#).



More recent studies indicate that online therapy is effective. Consider the following articles:

- [Therapy Online? Good as face to face?](#) This CNN article summarizes the findings of a study published in the Lancet in 2009.
- [Can't sleep? Try Online Therapy](#) This article in US News and World Report summarizes a study published in Sleep Journal in 2009.
- [VA's Telemental Health Efficacy Surpasses Face-to-Face Encounters](#) "This is the first large-scale study to show that telemedicine dramatically reduced hospital admissions and total hospitalized days," Dr. Linda S. Godleski said...
- [Avatar Therapy can help silence voices in schizophrenia](#) In an early pilot...almost all of the patients reported an improvement in the frequency and severity of the voices that they hear.

For a list of these and other studies visit <http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/does-online-therapy-work/>.



Azy Barak, PhD conducted [A Comprehensive Review and a Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Internet-Based Psychotherapeutic Interventions](#). This meta-analysis combined all of the studies involving internet-based psychotherapeutic interventions (9764 clients) up to the year 2007. The outcome indicated that internet based interventions were just as effective as face-to-face interventions. Since 2007, we have more research that backs up Azy's findings.

FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

It is imperative that the effectiveness, efficacy and safety of online services are established (Roth & Fonagy, 1996).

Future research should include:

- More large scale research vs. case studies
- PROCESS as well as OUTCOME
- Identify clients who are most/least likely to benefit from online therapies
- Benefits & limitations of online work
- More research on virtual reality environments
- Combining virtual environments and video footage <http://www.virtuallybetter.com/>

CONTROVERSIES IN THE LITERATURE

Who is (un)suitable for online counseling?

- Suicidal clients
- Underage Clients
- International Clients
- Serious psychopathology

While consideration should be given to various situations and client populations, each should be individually assessed for appropriateness of online intervention. With technology advancing at such a rapid pace, one can see that technological interventions may be suitable for some people who may seem to be a “screen-out” on initial consideration.



Do you feel informed about the history and research regarding distance counseling? Do you know where to find current literature on the topic?

LESSON 3

DISTANCE CREDENTIALLED COUNSELOR SKILLS & INFORMED CONSENT



Mental Health Counselors understand the skill set necessary to provide distance counseling in an effective and efficient manner.

Distance counseling began as a text-based process utilizing the written word. Here we will explore the required practical and emotional skills.

REQUIRED THERAPIST SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE COMMUNICATION

PRACTICAL SKILLS

- Fast or touch-typing
- Comfort with Internet modalities and software programs (e.g., IM, chat, email, downloading the latest browser)
- Curiosity and courage to investigate and alter parts of your computer you might not normally bother with (e.g. adjusting the configuration, adding hardware, etc.).
- Comfort responding swiftly when necessary (or tolerating delays between messages)
- Ability to accumulate, store, and use appropriate web links
- Ability to receive, store, and protect communications from clients
- Knowledge of encryption and other privacy technology
- Expressive writing, facility with both language and other available visual cues
- Training/expertise as mental health professional, with a theoretical base to draw upon

EMOTIONAL SKILLS

- Comfort describing own and others' feelings in text
- Comfort in a text-only environment
- Ability to make effective therapeutic interventions using only text
- Awareness of how client perceives therapist online
- Skill at clarifying accuracy of online communication
- Love of being online
- Experience with online relationships (synchronous and non-synchronous)
- Flexibility in approach and conceptualization of therapeutic relationships (e.g., believing it's possible to form therapeutic relationships without visual cues or employing traditional psychodynamic, frameworks, concepts, and techniques)
- Confidence with technology and role as online authority
- Tolerance for computer glitches
- Ability to move between modalities (virtual and f2f) in response to client need and circumstances

- Ability to handle acting-out behavior and intensity of emotion as expressed in client messages (ranging from frustration and anxiety to client projections, anger, boundary and abandonment issues, etc.)

SKILLS/ATTITUDES WHEN WORKING VIA PHONE

- Change in client's voice
- Welcome manner
- Voice tone/style
- Interactive nature
- Silence
- Structure
- Summarization
- Very intensive form of counseling
- Distractions

KEY COMPONENTS

The key components to becoming a seasoned Distance Counselor are summarized below ((Malone, Miller & Waltz, 2007)):

- Acquire knowledge, both rudimentary and advanced, via formal training such as the DCC Program, continuing education courses (online and face-to-face), professional journals and other written materials.
- Consider a certification that will demonstrate your proficiencies publicly.
- Integrate existing knowledge and skill with acquired knowledge and skill.
- Consider ongoing clinical supervision or case consultation on a case-by-case basis.
- Engage in peer supervision/consultation.
- Join organizations that offer peer support and/or disseminate new knowledge and advances in Distance Counseling.

Finally, once skill and experience are acquired, contributing to the field of Distance Counseling should be considered. This can be accomplished by mentoring other Distance Counselors new to the field, adding to the existing body of qualitative and quantitative literature on the topic of Distance Counseling, and providing education, when appropriate, to legislative bodies, licensing boards and Counselor Educators.



In addition to the typical components of informed consent, mental health counselors understand the importance of informing clients about the advantages and limitations regarding distance counseling.

ENSURING INFORMED CONSENT AND PREPARING CLIENTS FOR DISTANCE COUNSELING

- Setting Ground Rules
- Steps from initial contact to discharge
- Housekeeping issues
- Terms and Conditions/Privacy Policies
- Consent forms
- Counselor Notes and Client Records

Issues that should be covered in informed consent:

- Limits to confidentiality with regard to technology
- Limits to confidentiality with regard to reporting abuse or neglect to self or others
- Limits of confidentiality with regard to “ownership of the clinical record”
- Use of data, information and/or outcomes for research efforts
- Information should be included regarding clinical supervision or peer consultation
- Emergency contact protocol



When does informed consent begin?

Informed consent is not just the paper or document the client agrees to. Informed consent begins when the client decides to reach out for services. A counselor organization’s website should be written with informed consent in mind so that the information is easy to understand and the website should be built so that it is easy to navigate and information is easy to find.



Visit DeeAnna Nagel’s website for an example of written **informed consent**. This page offers the informed consent content on a web page:

<http://www.mentalhealthonthewebblog.com/informed-consent/>

Be sure to obtain legal consult before adapting any existing informed consent forms.



If you join an e-clinic or an Online Therapy Directory that allows access to the use of technology, be sure the informed consent of the e-clinic is not in conflict with your scope of practice and/or code of ethics. If you join an e-clinic with a contract to provide services much as you would for an EAP company, the informed consent represents the e-clinic and the owner of the record is the e-clinic. If, on the other hand, you are joining a therapist directory and utilizing a technology platform that many therapists access, the website may require an informed consent that represents the client's use of the site and would not necessarily represent the client's access to your services. In this case be sure that you can use your own informed consent with the client.

Examples of Online Therapy Platforms counselors can use to practice independently:

www.counsol.com

www.virtualtherapyconnect.com

www.talktoatherapistinc.com

Examples of E-Clinics counselors can join to practice within a certain group, EAP or insurance panel:

www.mdlive.com

www.breakthrough.com

www.shepellfgiservices.com/ec/index1.asp

Use this directory to compare online therapy platforms:

www.telementalhealthcomparisons.com



Visit the sites mentioned above. If possible, check out their Terms and Conditions, Privacy Policies and other links related to informed consent. How do they compliment or contradict what you would do in your own setting?



What skills do you need to possess to be a competent distance counselor? What components do you need to include in your informed consent?

LESSON 4

CLIENT SUITABILITY SCREENING AND INTAKE



Mental Health Counselors understand how screen clients for suitability in order to deliver appropriately selected methods of Distance Counseling based on the client need.

FACTORS FOR TELECOUNSELING

FACTORS FOR WRITTEN METHODS

CLIENT POPULATIONS

- Students
- Adults
- Accessibility factors and special needs
- Clients in remote or rural locations

PERSONALITY VARIABLES

John Suler, in his e-book, *The Psychology of Cyberspace*, describes personality variables when assessing client suitability:

Personality Variables:

- psychopathic (antisocial)
- narcissistic
- schizoid
- paranoid
- depressive and manic (impulsive)
- masochistic (self-defeating)
- obsessive and compulsive
- hysterical (histrionic)
- dissociative
- oppositional personality



Questions of interest when assessing if and what method a client may be suitable to:

- Does online anonymity and freedom of access encourage antisocial personalities? Are they some of the “black-hat” hackers of cyberspace?
- Do narcissistic people use access to numerous relationships as a means to gain an admiring audience.
- Do people with dissociative personalities tend to isolate their cyberspace life from their f2f lives. Do they tend to engage in the creation of multiple and distinct online identities?
- Are schizoid people attracted to the reduced intimacy resulting from online anonymity. Are they lurkers?
- Do manic people take advantage of asynchronous communication as a means to send measured responses to others, or do they naturally prefer the terse, immediate, and spontaneous conversations of chat and IM?
- Are compulsives generally drawn to computers & cyberspace for the control it gives them over their relationships and environment.
- Do histrionic people enjoy the opportunities for theatrical displays that are possible in online groups, especially in environments that provide software tools for creative self-expression?

WHO IS SUITABLE FOR ONLINE COUNSELING?

- Suicidal clients
- Underage clients
- International clients
- Serious disorders

ASSESSING CLIENT SUITABILITY: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

ISMHO (2003) offers guidelines for determining whether a client is suited to online therapy. Their model, which can be applied to a variety of distance methods, comprises the following categories of assessment:

- What communication methods are adequate or preferable for assessing the client?
- How might the person's computer skills, knowledge, platform, and Internet access affect the therapy? How knowledgeable is the person about online communication and relationships?

- How well is the person suited for the reading and writing involved in text communication (e-mail, chat)? How might previous and concurrent mental health treatment affect online therapy?
- How might personality type, presenting complaint, and diagnosis influence the person's suitability for online therapy?
- How might physical and medical factors affect online therapy?
- How might cross-cultural issues affect the therapy?
- What other online resources might be appropriate to incorporate into a treatment package?
- What communication methods are adequate or preferable for assessing the client?

CLIENT REFERRAL PROCEDURES

- Gather Intake information collection
- Delineate Emergency procedures
- Gather resources in client's geographic area
- Review Consent forms
- Give Additional Online Resources/Referrals



An online intake form can be accessed here:

<http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/2012/03/05/intake-questionnaire-and-the-online-therapy-process/>



Think about how you will incorporate intake into the distance counseling services you offer.

LESSON 5

SELECTING DELIVERY METHODS



Mental Health Counselors understand how to use appropriately selected Distance Counseling delivery methods suited to their work situations and roles (e.g. telecounseling, asynchronous email/message posting, synchronous digital chat and video-assisted counseling, etc).

COMBINING F2F AND DISTANCE COUNSELING



Three scenarios to consider:

1. If a person seeks distance counseling, part of the screening and intake is ascertaining whether or not the person is currently in treatment. If so, the possibility exists for distance counseling to be adjunct to the current therapy; the face-to-face counselor remains the primary counselor and the distance counselor is the secondary counselor. The primary counselor, with proper consent should be contacted and if both counselors determine that the client may benefit from adjunct services, the distance counselor may proceed. To adequately document, the primary counselor's treatment plan should include the adjunct counselor plan and the adjunct counselor should obtain a copy of the treatment plan.
2. If the person is currently seeing a counselor face-to-face and it is determined that distance counseling services would be necessary and beneficial, the counselor may opt to combine both face-to-face sessions and distance sessions. This may be due to travel schedules, work schedules and other issues.
3. If a person is currently receiving services from a distance counselor and it is deemed appropriate to seek face-to-face counseling, the distance counselor may refer the client to a local counselor in his/her community and the two counselors may utilize both distance and face-to-face to transition a client to a face-to-face primary counselor.

TIME-LIMITED CONTACT(S) OR ONGOING COURSE OF COUNSELING

- DC as an adjunct to f2f methods
- Short-term, problem-focused counseling or guidance services
- Ongoing counseling, with no predetermined time limits

TECHNOLOGY DELIVERY MODELS

- Tele-counseling
- Asynchronous Posting Models
- Synchronous Digital Chat
- Video-Assisted Counseling
- Group Delivery Models
- Computerized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CCBT)
- Avatar Therapy

Examples of Encrypted Methods of Delivery

- Email
 - <http://www.hushmail.com>
- Chat
 - <https://crypto.cat>
 - <http://www.chatcrypt.com>
- Audio
 - <http://www.voiponeclick.com/>
- Smart phone/SMS Texting
 - <http://hippomsg.com/>
- Video (can also be used without video for audio sessions)
 - <http://vsee.com/>
 - <http://www.vidyo.com/>
- Blended Technologies
 - <http://www.counsol.com>
 - <http://www.talktoanexpertinc.com/>
 - <https://virtualtherapyconnect.com/>
- Virtual Reality/Virtual Worlds
 - <http://www.inworldsolutions.net/>
 - <http://reactiongrid.com/>
 - <http://innovaision.com/>
- Blended Technologies
 - <http://www.counsol.com>
 - <http://www.talktoanexpertinc.com/>
 - <https://virtualtherapyconnect.com/>

Work settings vary regarding the distance method utilized. Many work settings have incorporated email exchange as a method of supporting new and ongoing clients. Other work settings utilize chat or phone with the assumption that this most resembles psychotherapy. Other work settings utilize bulletin boards, forums or list serves as a way to provide asynchronous support.



These articles represent the varying ways distance counseling is being conducted:

- [Phone Psychotherapy: Fewer Hangups?](#)
- [Online Advice](#)
- [On the Couch Online: Does Tele-Therapy Work?](#)
- [Japanese get psychotherapy via mobile phone](#)
- [Asperger's Therapy Hits Second Life](#)
- [London psychiatrist wants to offer online counseling through WoW](#)

Read archived articles from *TILT Magazine~ Therapeutic Innovations in Light of Technology*
<http://issuu.com/onlinetherapyinstitute/docs>



After reading these articles you should have a good understanding about the various ways online counseling can be delivered. Do you have any thoughts about what method of delivery best suits you?

GROUP DELIVERY MODELS

HISTORY

- Usenet
- Bulletin board/message board
- Chat group/chat room
- Mailing list/listserv
- Video Conferencing

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING GROUP THERAPY

- Assessment
- Facilitation
- Technical skills
- Active and directive
- Reading between the lines
- Setting norms
- Manifest vs. latent text
- Group cohesion



Group Therapy Online: Optimum Group Size Via Chat

<http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/2009/02/08/group-therapy-online-optimum-group-size/>



Develop a Group: Following this lesson you will be able to download and/or print a worksheet that offers you the opportunity to utilize your knowledge thus far and develop a group using one or a combination of distance technology delivery methods.



Are you considering what method of distance counseling best suits your style, your work setting and your clientele? Can you conceptualize combining various methods of delivery with a client or a group of clients?

LESSON 6

MODULATING EMOTIONS AND BETWEEN SESSION STRATEGIES



Mental Health Counselors understand how to prepare and educate clients to participate successfully in Distance Counseling.

John Suler describes the **Disinhibition Effect**: *It's well known that people say and do things in cyberspace that they wouldn't ordinarily say or do in the face-to-face world. They loosen up, feel more uninhibited, express themselves more openly. Researchers call this the "disinhibition effect."*



[The Online Disinhibition Effect](#) from John Suler's **Psychology of Cyberspace**.

Anthony (2009) offers this summary of the various components of the disinhibition effect: (expanded with **clinical examples** here: <http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/2009/02/25/the-online-disinhibition-effect/>)

- Educate the Client
- Titrate Client Disclosure
- Offer Emotional Release Between Sessions

PREPARING THE CLIENT FOR DISINHIBITION OF EMOTIONS



Mental Health Counselors understand how to use technology to help their clients follow up and implement recommendations beyond actual counseling sessions.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES BETWEEN SESSIONS

- Strategies for communicating about logistical issues
- Strategies for communicating about emergencies or pressing concerns
- Strategies for sharing resources and information

Interventions Between Sessions

- Bibliotherapy
- Journaling
- Homework
- Review of Prior Sessions



Audio and video feedback has been utilized with clients over several decades. With video feedback the therapist and the client view a partial or full session that has occurred earlier and the session is then discussed. This link features an article published in 1969 describing the use of audio feedback in therapy. The process described is similar to a client using email between therapy sessions as a method of journal writing and then processing the emails with the therapist in the next f2f or online session. The article must be purchased so this is not required reading, but does place a historical reference to the questions below. <http://link.springer.com/static-content/lookinside/869/art%253A10.1007%252FBF02027873/000.png>

- What do you think of using previous chat therapy transcripts with clients?
- What about the client having access to email exchanges?
- Would this be the same as processing a previous session with a f2f client using an audio or video recording?



What educative and process-oriented skills might you adapt to help a client regulate emotions during distance counseling? Think about what strategies you might use between sessions. What seems to fit your preferred method of delivery?

LESSON 7

SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY STRATEGIES



Mental Health Counselors understand how to employ security strategies related to the provision of Distance Counseling services.

ENCRYPTION TECHNOLOGY AND RELATED SECURITY STRATEGIES

What is encryption?

Encryption Software: The counselor should have the ability to utilize this technology to protect client confidentiality and to prevent records from being hacked. Examples of various forms of encrypted delivery platforms were offered in Lesson 5.



[Use a Secure and Encrypted Email Service for Online Therapy](#)

[Encrypting Health and Wellness Information \(offers a picture of encryption\)](#)

[Videoconferencing- Secure, Encrypted, HIPAA Compliant](#)

[Cryptainer](#) is an encryption program that can be used to encrypted a drive on a computer or to encrypt a flash drive.

SETTING UP A WORKSPACE

- Create a quiet private room so that you are undisturbed.
- Be aware of unexpected noises (delivery truck/gardeners etc.).

COUNSELOR NOTES AND CLIENT RECORDS

MANAGING CLIENT IDENTITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Identity Management

Confidentiality

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act):



HIPAA/HITECH Resources:

www.zurinstitute.com/articles.html#hipaa

www.personcenteredtech.com



Following this lesson you will have the opportunity to test your “*best practice skills.*”



How are confidentiality concerns in your face-to-face work setting similar or different to a distance counseling work setting?



Think about what encryption platform may work best in your work setting. Think about ways to manage client identity. Review your in-person confidentiality strategies and adopt necessary components to your distance counseling practice.

LESSON 8

THEORY INTEGRATION



Mental Health Counselors understand how to adapt counseling theory and effective counseling techniques for application to Distance Counseling practice.



You can access a quick review of the major counseling theories at Wikiversity's [Theories of Counseling](#) page.

COUNSELING THEORIES: APPLICATIONS FOR DISTANCE COUNSELING PRACTICE

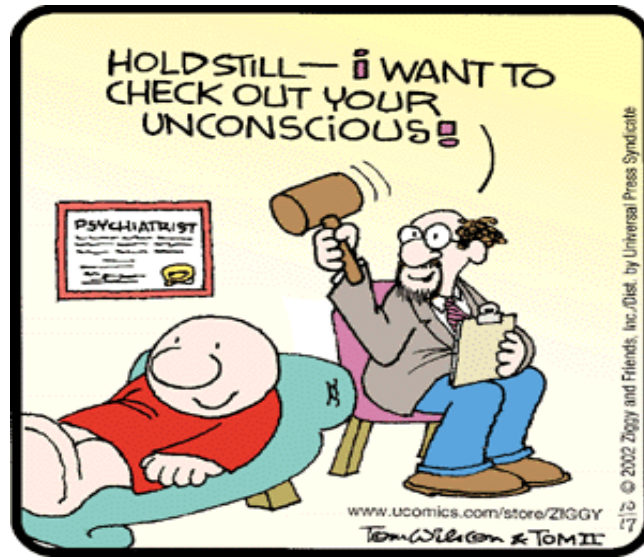
Gordon Paul asked a now famous question in 1967:
(See *Journal of Counseling & Development*, McGowan, Fall 2003, p. 387)

“What works best for this particular client with this particular problem with this particular counselor in this particular setting?”

EXAMINATION OF THEORY-BASED RESEARCH TO INFORM EFFECTIVE COUNSELING PRACTICE

Why do counselors need theories and how are they useful?

- A context for understanding and interpretation of client issues
- A descriptive blueprint that explains adaptive behaviors
- Useful counseling intervention strategies supported by empirical research
- Eclectic integration of theories
- Systematic and client-appropriate application of theory based interventions
- Evidence based counseling techniques



APPLYING THEORY/RESEARCH-BASED FACE-TO-FACE PRACTICES TO DISTANCE COUNSELING WORK

What is the state of evidence-based comparisons between effective practices in Distance Counseling and face-to-face counseling?

Effectiveness and evidence in counseling

Replicating effective face-to-face practices for DC

Unique contributions of Distance Counseling on its own merits



Online Therapy: A Therapist's Guide to Expanding Your Practice by Kathleene Derrig-Palumbo and Foojan Zeine offers a forward by Albert Ellis and discusses in a casual style, several counseling theories. Therapists such as Ellis (Rational-Emotive), Meichenbaum (Cognitive-Behavioral) and Harville Hendrix (Imago) among others, are interviewed about their theoretical background and how they might use the theory online. The information is anecdotal but interesting as it adds major theorists to the conversation of distance counseling.



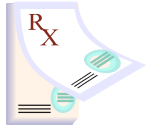
Think Outside the Box Following this lesson you will be offered the opportunity to explore your own theoretical orientation and how your orientation fits with the delivery of counseling via technology. An additional assignment introduces you to Anne and prepares you for Lesson 9.



Can you begin to conceptualize how various theoretical approaches might be utilized in distance counseling?

LESSON 9

CREATING AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN



Mental Health Counselors understand the importance of creating a treatment plan utilizing an established protocol.

You have just completed an assignment regarding introductory emails and the case of **Anne**.

Anne as case example will serve the purpose of demonstrating an effective strategy for developing an individualized plan, sometimes known as a service plan or a treatment plan. Depending on your work setting, documentation may be very formal or very casual.

Anne's case began with the initial email exchanges. After **Anne** chose a counselor, she filled out an online Questionnaire.

Following the receipt of the Questionnaire, a chat session was scheduled with **Anne**.

The simulated chat transcript is included in this lesson.



Clinical Documentation



Following the chat transcript are three examples of progress notes. Conceptualize writing a progress note from an email exchange or a chat transcript. Which format seems best suited to the method of delivery and your work setting?



Following the progress note examples are examples of a treatment plan and a monthly progress report. Can you conceptualize writing a treatment plan based on the case of Anne?



As you read through the case of Anne, think about being in a chat room consultation with someone void of a physical presence. Does this lack of physical presence make it less possible to connect empathically? Does the chat transcript stand alone as the psychotherapy record? Or is the chat transcript considered a recording thus, needing permission from the client to keep as a permanent record? Read these two archived articles. Both articles touch on building the relationship and maintaining the record.

[Online Psychoanalyst Opens Shop](#)
[Intimacy in Psychotherapy Online](#)

Example of a Treatment Protocol utilizing short-term distance counseling interventions:

1st Chat/Email Exchange:

- Housekeeping issues such as technology breakdown, email between sessions, emergency contact etc.
- Review Intake Form or other initial assessment instruments
- Discuss presenting problem/build rapport
- Give bibliotherapy assignment (general in scope) or other similarly related item

Counselor should create a treatment plan between the 1st contact and next contact.

2nd Chat/Email Exchange

- Check in
- Review Treatment Plan
- Ask about assignment from previous session and if completed, process the assignment with client.
- Assign new homework.

3rd Chat/Email Exchange

- Check in and be sure to comment on any progress made so far.
- Ask about assignment from previous session and if completed, process the assignment with client.
- Assign new homework

Sessions 4-6

- Determine the need for additional sessions
- Closure

After the final session

- Summary of Progress
- Consumer Satisfaction Survey



Think about your work setting. Are you required to produce evidence-based documentation? After reviewing the case of Anne, are you able to conceptualize how online therapy might work as another counseling delivery option even in very traditional mental health settings that require stringent note-keeping and treatment plan protocols?

LESSON 10

TERMINATION AND REFERRAL & OBTAINING CLIENT FEEDBACK



Mental Health Counselors know how to bring their clients to closure and help them deal with the termination of the Distance Counseling process while providing technology-assisted strategies for re-establishing contact if and/or when necessary.

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP CONTACTS

- Factors influencing termination of counseling
- Structured program with time trajectory and limited number of sessions
- Evaluating progress towards reaching agreed upon goals
- Need and strategies for follow-up contacts
- The Ethics of Termination and Referral



How would you “wrap up” your therapeutic work with an online client? Would you consider a written summary? If the counseling took place via chat would you summarize the client’s progress in the last chat? If the client ends counseling before goals are met, would you email the client a summary of progress to date with suggestions for the future?



Mental Health Counselors know how to elicit responses from their clients regarding the effectiveness of Distance Counseling in order to provide continuously improved services.

ASSESSING CLIENT/COUNSELOR SATISFACTION AND DISTANCE COUNSELING EFFECTIVENESS AND SERVICES

- Client satisfaction
- Video counseling
- Stand-alone software
- Telephone counseling
- Counselor Satisfaction

USING CLIENT/COUNSELOR FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTANCE COUNSELING SERVICES

- Institutional Settings
- Accredited Organizations
- Designing a Survey

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ADVERTISING AND CLIENT/CONSUMER ENDORSEMENTS

Counselors should review their code of ethics regarding advertising and endorsements/testimonials. The American Counseling Association is very explicit about testimonials from clients.



Sites like www.yelp.com and www.kudzu.com allow for a professional profile and the solicitation of client “ratings.” Are ratings and comments considered testimonials? Does this violate your code of ethics? Even if testimonials are allowed, do these sites compromise confidentiality? If a client rates you poorly and leaves a negative comment, do you respond? Remember, everything that is on the web stays on the web. See also: <http://drkkolmes.com/2009/05/07/the-yelp-dilemma-clients-reviewing-their-therapists-on-review-sites/>



Take a look at a few of the sample questions from the ReadyMinds Career Counseling services client satisfaction survey. Think about what questions you might ask in a feedback form or survey you create. The written assignment follows after the lesson. Remember, this lesson offers two written assignments.

3. Counselor related the results of my career assessment to specific fields and job titles within them.	Please Select ▼
4. Counselor provided helpful resources and strategies to conduct my career exploration activities.	Please Select ▼
5. Counselor managed the time during the career planning/guidance session with efficiency and sensitivity.	Please Select ▼
6. If self-marketing for employment (for example: resume review, interviewing skills, application procedures, job search, etc...) was an important focus within your counseling, the counselor's advice was helpful. If it was not a focus, please indicate N/A response.	Please Select ▼
7. I felt motivated to proceed with the actions recommended after my career planning/guidance session.	Please Select ▼
8. Written documents such as my Welcome Message and Guidance Summary with resources were helpful communications.	Please Select ▼



By now you should understand the importance of client feedback and how to implement satisfaction surveys without compromising ethics related to testimonials.

LESSON 11

ONLINE LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY



 **Mental health counselors know how to effectively communicate via technology-delivered communications including drafting initial introductory email, between session emails and treatment summaries.**

POTENTIAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS THAT MAY OCCUR WITHIN DISTANCE COUNSELING SERVICES

- Cues are different
- Time shifting
- Black hole and other technology malfunctions
- Cultural issues
- Client honesty
- Failure to make contact
- Client's needs are more clinical than you can provide
- Client is dissatisfied with your services
- Client engages in inappropriate behavior
- Other therapists
- Dual relationships

NETIQUETTE

Simply stated, *netiquette* stands for network etiquette -- that is, the etiquette of cyberspace.



You can search and seek definitions of Netiquette terms/symbols as well as a myriad of other cyber-terms at <http://www.netlingo.com/>. See the Netlingo online dictionary.

Factors to Consider with Email

- Content of subject line
- Emoticons
- Abbreviations
- Mood and personality
- Response style
- Boundaries

SYNCHRONOUS DIGITAL CHAT

THE POWER OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Written communications, especially via asynchronous methods - may in some instances actually provide richer and deeper counseling results than face-to-face communications:

- Use of comprehensive intake questionnaires coupled with assessment results
- Deeper insights due to time and reflection
- Anonymity provides for openness
- Articulate and effective counselors

INTRODUCTIONS AND INITIAL MESSAGES

- Pre-counseling questionnaires
- Introduction emails to welcome a client or provide
- Informed consent
- Skillful communication

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS



John Suler's work by the same title, *Email Communications and Relationships*, includes the essential skills necessary to communicate effectively via email. See <http://www.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/emailrel.html>

SKILLS FOR WRITING ON THE INTERNET

Qualities necessary to emote through email/chat communication

- Warmth and caring
- Conversational
- Contextualization
- Emotional bracketing
- Descriptive immediacy
- Similes, metaphors, and stories
- Writing style (fonts, capitals, colors)
- Empathic mirroring



Mental Health Counselors understand the importance of cultural competency.

In *Online Counseling: A Handbook for Mental Health Professionals (2003)*, Skinner and Latchford address multicultural issues clearly.

- Cultural beliefs of the counselor
- Perceptions of the counselor about the client
- Perceptions of the client about the counselor
- Language
- Cultural context of models of counseling
- The impact of distance counseling

Cultural differences within the United States



Within the United States, in addition to ethnic diversity, cultural differences exist. For example the cultural difference between rural and urban populations can be vast. People of different socio-economic backgrounds have different cultural experiences. People who live in southern states experience a different culture than do those living in northern states. How do these subtleties play out through distance counseling?

Understanding the culture of Cyberspace

Mixed Reality~ the merging of real and virtual worlds.



The following articles represent a growing phenomenon. People exist in cyberspace for work and for pleasure, sometimes creating entirely new and different personas of themselves. These different personas are not necessarily pathological. Understanding that many people live in a mixed reality is very important to potentially understanding your client. We spend time online and offline yet our relationships and personas in both the real and virtual worlds have equal meaning in our lives. The more and more wired we become the more likely your client will have experienced a virtual persona, whether through virtual worlds like Second Life, social connections on Facebook or through gaming such as World of Warcraft. Living in a mixed reality has become part of our social fabric.

[I am my Avatar](#)
[Cyberspace as Culture](#)

Recommended Movie

[Life 2.0](#)



You should have a sense of how to integrate your language skills into your online therapeutic work. Remember too that cultural competency now stretches beyond the global borders and into cyberspace.

LESSON 12

ASSESSMENT TOOLS & CRISIS INTERVENTION STRATEGIES



Mental Health Counselors understand how to utilize appropriately validated online and offline forms of assessment for clients and to assist them with meaningful interpretation.



Read this article as a refresher regarding testing and assessment. [FAQ/Finding Information About Psychological Tests](#)



[Internet-based Psychological Testing/Assessment](#) This is an excellent article by Barak and Buchanan that sets the stage for this lesson.

[Great information about online testing and assessment](#) Further thoughts about the topic.



Consider the difference between computer-assisted tests and test that are administered via the internet. For instance, some instruments can be administered on the computer using software that is on a disk or hard drive. The client takes the test on the computer in lieu of a paper and pencil test.

- Is a proctor necessary or can the client be left alone to complete the test?
- Is it okay to send a scanned copy of an instrument to your client through email for the client to fill out and fax back to you?
- Can you send a copy of an instrument to a client and proctor the test via webcam?

Be sure to check with the test publisher about how the test should be administered.

ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Summarized from: Sampson, J.P. (2000). Using the Internet to enhance testing in counseling. Journal of Counseling and Development. 78, 348-356.

- Test selection
- Test orientation
- Test administration
- Test scoring
- Test interpretation
- Problematic Issues

THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN DISTANCE CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Assisting the diagnostic process: formal assessment and the clinical interview, DSM-IV

QUALITATIVE FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

- Use of “client-expressed” data in assessment
- Analysis of client experience/behavior as an assessment technique



[Are those Psychological Tests on the Net Valid?](#) This article explains the difference between tests on the internet that are valid and reliable and those that are not. To be sure a test is valid for administration via the internet check with the test publisher.

We can be assured however, that all of those Facebook quizzes are not accurate and are truly just for fun! [The Incredible Knowledge of the Facebook Quiz!](#)



Useful Websites

<http://buros.unl.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp> - Test Reviews Online

<http://www.pantesting.com/> - online psychological and pre-employment testing

<http://www.queendom.com/> - self help that can be integrated with counselor feedback.

<http://und.edu/health-wellness/counseling-center/self-help-assessment.cfm> - university website offering self-help to students



Mental health counselors know how to facilitate crisis situations that may arise at any point during the therapeutic process, from initial contact to termination.



If you are having a difficult time conceptualizing working with people in crisis via distance, consider that crisis hotlines have been in existence for a very long time. If you have never worked a crisis hotline, consider taking a hotline training and volunteering to gain additional skills and to increase your comfort level.

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

- Local backup
- Plans for suicide/homicide intervention

READYMINDS SUICIDE INTERVENTION WITH PHONE CLIENTS

Strong Probability of Harm to Self (For ex., client says, I will take a bottle of pills tonight, If I don't hear from boyfriend tonight I will jump out the window)	Imminent Danger to Self (For ex., client says, I have a gun to my head right now, the window is open next to me and I feel like jumping)	Strong or Imminent Probability of Harm to Another (For ex., client says, I'm going to kill that math professor, he ruined my chances of getting into med school)
Ask the client to identify his/her location & area code, then call the operator (dial 0) or area code + 555 1212 and ask for assistance in accessing the local emergency services for the client's location.	1. Attempt to keep client on phone. 2. Ask the client to identify his/her location and contact campus security using another phone. Ask the client to identify his/her location and area code, then call your operator (dial 0) or area code + 555 1212 and ask for assistance in accessing the local emergency services for the client's location 3. If Distance Counselor does not have immediate access to another phone line, alert the client that you will be hanging up, calling Campus Security or appropriate emergency resource and calling back. 4. Ask the client to wait by the phone to receive your return phone call.	1. Make every effort to immediately contact the threatened individual directly. 2. Inform local law enforcement authorities. If the counselor has no means of establishing contact with the threatened person (e.g. client threatens roommate whose name is not known to the counselor), the counselor will contact appropriate local law enforcement authorities immediately. 3. Inform client that you are reporting the threat.

SAD PERSONS SCALE

To assess lethality of suicidal threat

SAD PERSONS Scale

A client will receive one point for each factor that receives an affirmative answer.

Scores:

0–2 = Little risk

3–4 = Follow closely

5–6 = Strongly consider psychiatric hospitalization

7–10 = Very high risk; hospitalize or commit

S ex _____	More men complete; more women attempt	Yes ____ No ____
A ge _____	Elderly or adolescent	Yes ____ No ____
D epression	Especially with hopelessness	Yes ____ No ____
P revious attempt	Especially if potentially lethal	Yes ____ No ____
E thanol abuse	Or other drugs	Yes ____ No ____
R ational thinking loss	Command hallucinations, Organic Brain Syndrome	Yes ____ No ____
S ocial support deficit	Or perception of poor supports	Yes ____ No ____
O rganized plan	Will, available means	Yes ____ No ____
N o spouse	Separated, divorced, widowed, single	Yes ____ No ____
S ickness	Especially chronic and debilitating illnesses	Yes ____ No ____

- Informed Consent
- Accessing a person's location during an emergency
- Domestic Violence
- Mental Illness and Addictions



Offering Online Interventions to Victims of Domestic Violence

<http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/earoctober12.pdf>



Have you considered what online assessment tools you might use to enhance your f2f or online practice? By now you should be aware of your ethical responsibility regarding testing and assessment. You should also be comfortable dealing with client emergencies and handling crisis via distance.

LESSON 13

ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES



Career and School Counselors know how to apply ethical guidelines and standards relevant to Distance Counseling in their respective fields of practice and know where to find resources on legal guidelines and standards relevant to their specific Distance Counseling specialties in their states and jurisdiction.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Each individual counselor's scope of practice and professional membership will direct that counselor to his/her ethical guidelines of their professional organization or licensing board.



In 2009 The **Online Therapy Institute** developed an Ethical Framework for helping professionals working in the fields of mental health. The [Ethical Framework for the Use of Technology in Mental Health](#) was developed to offer a global point of reference. The [Ethical Framework for the Use of Technology in Career and School Guidance](#) was developed later the same year and other frameworks for the use of social media, for coaches and for EAPs have been developed since. The frameworks have been created so that they may be amended as technology changes and as the global community grows. The frameworks are suitable for organizations and businesses to use as a guidepost in creating, implementing, amending and updating ethical codes and guidelines. The framework is comprehensive taking the components of the major codes related to distance counseling and combining them into one document. In addition, the OTI framework includes ethical guidance on topics related to social networking and Web 2.0 and working within EAP settings.



Many jurisdictions across the globe do not have professional standards that counselors must follow. Some countries have yet to legislate the profession. Here in the United States professional organizations are beginning to catch up with the need for ethical guidelines regarding technology.

[American Counseling Association Code of Ethics 2005](#) The 2005 revised ACA Code of Ethics is perhaps one of the best representations of "best practice" for distance counselors in the United States to date. The new code covers the following regarding technology applications:

- Benefits and Limitations
- Technology Assisted Services
- Inappropriate Services
- Access
- Laws and Statutes
- Assistance
- Technology and Informed Consent
- Sites on the World Wide Web

Other Codes of Ethics/Guidelines that include issues related to Distance Counseling

[National Board for Certified Counselors](#) POLICY REGARDING THE PROVISION OF DISTANCE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES created in 2012- this is the ethics statement that a Distance Credentialed Counselor follows.

[American Mental Health Counselors Association](#)

[Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors](#) Newly amended in 2010
Rewritten Section: Technology and Distance Counseling

[Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers](#) last revised 1996

[American Psychological Association](#) Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology 2013

[American Telemedicine Association](#) Practice Guidelines for Video-based Online Telemental Health Services 2013

[British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#)
Guidelines for online counseling and psychotherapy including Guidelines for Online Supervision (3rd Edition) revised in 2009

[International Society for Mental Health Online](#) created guidelines for working online in 1999.

Related Specifically to Career and School Guidance Counselors:

[Association of Computer- Based Systems for Career Information](#) created standards provide a framework for organizations and individuals to reference in order to promote the delivery of the highest quality of career information and services.

[National Career Development Association](#) offers a resource page related to standards and codes of ethics in the career counseling field.

RELATED ETHICAL ISSUES

- Informed consent
- Client suitability
- Counselor's professional credentials, competence and training
- Confidentiality of communications
- Rights of redress
- Withholding services or offering services when need is present but empirical evidence of effective service is pending

JURISDICTION

- U.S. JURISDICTION
- INTERNATIONAL JURISDICTION



These articles and posts offer more information about ethics and law pertaining to distance counseling

- This 2008 article appeared in the HPSO Risk Advisor newsletter. [The Internet-license connection](#). HPSO is a major malpractice insurance company for mental health professionals.
- CPH and Associates, another malpractice insurance company, has a series of [archived articles](#) about online counseling that appeared in their Legal Resources Bulletin.
- Online Counseling: Is it Legal or not? <http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/2011/01/27/is-online-counseling-legal/>



Following this lesson, test your legal/ethical IQ!



You should be thinking about contacting your own licensing board to find out about any regulations about distance counseling in your state. Check your professional association's code of ethics for items pertaining to distance counseling and call your liability insurance company to determine your coverage for online counseling.

LESSON 14

ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT



Mental health counselors know how to ethically and responsibly advertise distance counseling services and understand how to incorporate distance counseling services into their existing suite of services.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION MEDIA AND A WELL-DESIGNED WEB SITE

Website design



Individual websites

Counselors may design their own websites describing their services.
Example DIY web build companies that are user-friendly:

Vistaprint <http://www.vistaprint.com/>

Weebly <http://www.weebly.com/>

Wix <http://www.wix.com/>

Counselors may opt to pay for a web build. Choose a company that has experience building counselor websites and understands the needs of online counselors. Ask to see a portfolio.

[Tips for making your website accessible](#)



Directories

Directories provide listings of counselors. They may do a credential check before including a counselor in their service directory, in order to protect potential clients. The two most prominent directories on the internet that potential clients visit:

[The Therapy Directory](#) by Psychology Today
GoodTherapy.org



[So You Want to Join an E-Clinic...](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA- REMEMBER TO MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL ONLINE PRESENCE



Ethical Framework for the Use of Social Media by Mental Health Professionals

Articles for Clinicians Using Social Media

BUSINESS DETAILS INCLUDING FEE STRUCTURES AND INSURANCE FOR COUNSELORS AND CLIENTS



Insurance and Online Therapy: What's the Scoop?



Q

How long do you think it might take to build a private practice online?

A

As long as it takes to build a practice f2f...*market, sell, engage, network*

Read this to create a realistic business plan: [The Costs of Etherapy](#)



We have just learned about considerations when incorporating distance counseling into your work setting. In the following assignment is an action plan is designed to help you think through issues you may need to consider.



How will you set your distance counseling services up successfully and responsibly?

LESSON 15

EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION



Mental Health Counselors understand the need for adequate education, continuing education and supervision throughout the career lifespan.

COUNSELOR TRAINING NEEDS

Counselor education and related programs



[The Future Of Innovation In Training Innovative Therapists](#)

Continuing education training and credentialing for experienced counselors

Continuing education is offered by [ReadyMinds](#) and [Online Therapy Institute](#) as well as other accredited organizations. More and more courses are now available about mental health, technology and distance counseling.

Distance Supervision

Currently there are few established guidelines in the United States regarding online supervision. Arkansas and Alaska are two states that have approved distance supervision due to rural regions in the states.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has established ethical guidelines and these guidelines will be discussed here. It should be noted that just as with distance counseling, distance supervision can occur in conjunction with face2face supervision and can include email, chat, video, phone or a combination of delivery methods. The BACP guidelines are primarily oriented toward chat/email via the internet.



[Ethical Framework for the Use of Technology in Supervision](#)

[Listservs and Case Consultation- What About Confidentiality?](#)

[The Use of Technology in Supervision](#)



Have you considered how you might continue your professional development beyond this credentialing course?