



Board of Behavioral Sciences



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Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Department of Consumer Affairs

Statement on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Telehealth

This is interim guidance on inquiries received by the Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board) relating to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the use of telehealth. The Board will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

All licensees, registered associates, and trainees utilizing telehealth need to take care to use HIPAA compliant tools. In addition, they are strongly urged to review Board's statutes and regulations related to telehealth to ensure compliance with the law. These can be found by visiting the following link and clicking on "Telehealth":

<https://bbs.ca.gov/licensees/hipaa.html>

Licensees and Telehealth

All California licensed marriage and family therapists, educational psychologists, clinical social workers, and professional clinical counselors are permitted to perform services with clients who are located in California via telehealth.

Associates and Telehealth

All associate marriage and family therapists, associate clinical social workers, and associate professional clinical counselors who are registered in California are permitted to perform services via telehealth with clients who are located in California under the supervision of their supervisor.

If the associate is working in a governmental entity, school, college, university, or an institution that is nonprofit and charitable, the required weekly direct supervisor contact may be via two-way, real-time videoconferencing. If the associate is working in a setting other than the types listed above, the law requires the supervisor contact to be in person.

Social Work Interns and Telehealth

The law defines social work interns as individuals enrolled in a master's or doctoral training program in social work in an accredited school or department of social work. These individuals are not yet under the jurisdiction of the Board. It is up to the school and the school's accrediting agency to determine the permissibility of telehealth for social work interns.

Clinical Counselor Trainees and Telehealth

Clinical counselor trainees are unlicensed and unregistered individuals who are currently enrolled in their master's or doctoral degree program designed to qualify them for licensure as a professional clinical counselor, and who have completed at least 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of their degree program.

The law does not prohibit clinical counselor trainees from providing services via telehealth. The school must approve and have a written agreement with the site detailing, among other things, the methods by which supervision shall be provided. Therefore, they may perform services via telehealth and receive supervision via videoconferencing as long as the school allows it.

Marriage and Family Therapist Trainees and Telehealth

Marriage and family therapist trainees are unlicensed and unregistered individuals who are currently enrolled in their master's or doctoral degree program designed to qualify them for licensure as a marriage and family therapist, and who have completed at least 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of their degree program.

MFT trainees are permitted to provide services via telehealth. The school must approve and have an agreement with the site detailing, among other things, the methods by which supervision shall be provided.

MFT trainees can count pre-degree hours toward licensure, so they need to make sure they follow the law regarding counting experience hours. If they are working in a governmental entity, school, college, university, or institution that is nonprofit and charitable, they may obtain supervision via videoconferencing. If they are working in a setting other than the types listed above, the law requires the supervisor contact to be in person.