I. **Overview**

The COVID 19 Pandemic has created widespread fear, helplessness, illness and death, loss of economic resources, disruption in social supports, traumatic stress, post traumatic distress, and complications to previous mental health challenges. The Pandemic continues to create a global need for support of both crisis counseling and formal mental health treatment (Roseman, Glassman & Moreland, 2020). The American Psychological Association, in collaboration with the CDC Pandemic Guidelines, recommends telepsychotherapy as a best practice in a pandemic event. Telepsychotherapy ensures eliminating the risk of infection spread, provides more extensive access to services, has been a proven effective form of treatment in a pandemic event and addresses the impediment on effective counseling processes with the use of protective facial wear.

II. **Applicability:**

These procedures apply to students on all three campuses.

III. **Procedure: Moderate Alert Protections in Place**

To reduce the spread of infection and provide a best practice provision of mental health and wellness services in a pandemic, remote telepsychotherapy will be the procedure in which the Counseling Center will provide clinical services. Counseling Center staff will continue working effectively from home to provide telepsychotherapy. This includes the use of telephones and teleconferencing to provide counseling services and will be provided by Microsoft Teams which is HIPPA compliant at UWO.

A. **Procedure/Process**

1. The front desk will continue functioning remotely by use of the recommended Jabber App. Jabber forwards the UWO phone line to an alternate phone line, which is currently a Counseling Center cell phone. All students requesting services will be triaged for crisis needs and identification of type of service requested, as is the current practice. The current crisis triage defines a crisis as threat of harm to self and/or others, recent trauma, recent loss, considering leaving school which results in an offer of a same day telepsychotherapy crisis appointment. The addition of experiencing traumatic distress related to the pandemic and/or social justice concerns will be considered an offer of a same day crisis appointment. Students who are requesting a non-crisis telepsychotherapy appointment will be offered an appointment as soon as possible.
2. All documentation and scheduling will remain online through the remote use of the Counseling Center Electronic Medical Record System, Titanium. The Counseling Center will utilize paperless procedures and will remotely scan incoming documents into the EMR.

3. Students will be provided the necessary documentation to complete through an email which is a confidential, paperless process of Titanium that inputs directly into the student electronic record.

4. Counselors will schedule clinical appointments through meeting invitations through Microsoft Teams and/or scheduled telephone appointments.

5. All students will be required to agree to the conditions of the standard practice of an informed consent form that identifies confidentiality, procedures, service provisions, limits of confidentiality and the unique aspects of telepsychotherapy.

6. Telepsychotherapy includes individual counseling, group counseling, crisis management, wellness workshops, biofeedback, mindfulness practices, just breathe appointments, psychoeducational workshops, AODA interventions and student success interventions.

7. Outreach and training will be conducted virtually which will include scheduled trainings/outreach Counseling Center staff, on demand web-training, social media utilization, virtual campaigns, departmental liaisons, and interactive webpage resources.

8. The Graduate Training Program will continue remote and virtually. Interns and Practicum students will provide services virtually, all clinical services will be videotaped with client approval through Microsoft Teams (standard practice), supervisors will utilize videos for supervision and weekly individual and group supervision will be provided.

9. Signage will be provided on the Center doors, marketing to outline the telepsychotherapy services provided and how to access services and access to crisis services.

B. Face Covering Requirements

1. Students and staff will not be required to wear face coverings when they are engaged in telepsychotherapy.

2. Students will engage in telepsychotherapy in a private, confidential space that allows for safe removal of face covering and for engaging in confidential services.

3. Private, confidential spaces will be provided across campus to allow for students to engage in confidential counseling services if needed. The space will allow for other departments confidential services provided through virtual services.

4. Encouragement of appropriate face covering requirements for safety/wellness in daily functioning will be provided.

C. Physical Distancing Parameters

1. Physical distancing will not be needed when providing telepsychotherapy services due the nature of the solo, private environment to engage in counseling services.

2. Students, faculty, and instructional staff should maintain social distancing as much as possible to reduce the potential for spread of the virus. Seating arrangements will be indicated on maps outside of classrooms and/or chairs will be bagged if they are not to be used.

3. Encouragement of appropriate physical distancing for safety/wellness in daily functioning will be provided.

D. Hygiene

1. Students and staff will not need to engage in hygiene practices to participate in telepsychotherapy.
2. Encouragement of appropriate hygiene for safety/wellness in daily functioning will be provided.

E. Disinfection
   1. N.A.

Procedure Modifications: Very High Alert
   1. There will be no one on the campus.

Procedure Modifications: High Alerts
   1. The same procedures as identified above at the Moderate Alert.

Procedure Modifications: Low Alert
   1. Phased process of returning staff to the Counseling Center to provide in-person counseling following national and regional safety and wellness guidelines.

IV. Guidance Documents/Policy Links:


https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/ American Psychological Association

https://iacsinc.org/ International Association of Counseling Services (Accrediting body of University Counseling Centers/UWO Counseling Center is IACS Accredited)

V. Templates/Forms:

VI. Definitions
Telepsychotherapy-- (Distance Therapy) any type of psychotherapy in which sessions are not conducted face-to-face because of problems of mobility, geographical isolation, or other limiting factors. Distance therapy includes interventions by telephone, audioconference, or videoconference (known collectively as telepsychotherapy) and the Internet (American Psychological Association)

VII. Revision History:
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