



Families First Therapy, LLC

TELEHEALTH INFORMED CONSENT

- You will need access to the certain technological services and tools to engage in telehealth-based services with me.
- Telehealth has both benefits and risks, which we will be monitoring as you proceed with your work.
- It is possible that receiving services by telehealth will turn out to be inappropriate for you, and that we may have to cease work by telehealth.
- You can stop work by telehealth at any time without prejudice.
- You will need to participate in creating an appropriate space for your telehealth sessions.
- You will need to participate planning for technology failures, mental health crises, and medical emergencies.
- I follow security best practices and legal standards in order to protect your health care information, but you will also need to participate in maintaining your own security and privacy.

What is Telehealth?

“Telehealth” means, in short, *a provision of mental health services with the provider and recipient of services being in separate locations, and the services being delivered over electronic media.* Services delivered via telehealth rely on a number of electronic, often Internet-based, technology tools. I provide telehealth via an application called Vsee that may be installed on your smart phone, computer, or tablet:

- Vsee messenger can be downloaded for free here: <https://vsee.com/messenger/>
- You will need access to Internet service for your telehealth session.
- If you have any questions or concerns about the above tools, please address them directly to me so we can discuss their risks, benefits, and specific application to your treatment.

POTENTIAL TELEHEALTH BENEFITS - Receiving services via telehealth allows you to:

- Receive services when you are unable to travel to the service provider’s office.
- Receive services at times or in places where the service may not otherwise be available.
- Receive services in a fashion that may be more convenient and less prone to delays than in-person meetings.
- Receive services without potential risks of transmission of COVID 19 or other transmittable viruses.
- The unique characteristics of telehealth media may also help some people make improved progress on health goals that may not have been otherwise achievable without telehealth.

POTENTIAL TELEHEALTH RISKS - Receiving services via telehealth has the following risks:

Telehealth services can be impacted by technical failures, may introduce risks to your privacy, and may reduce my ability to directly intervene in crises or emergencies. Here is a non-exhaustive list of examples:

- Internet connections and cloud services could cease working or become too unstable to use.
- Computer or smartphone hardware can have sudden failures or run out of power, or local power services can fail.
- Interruptions may disrupt services at important moments, and I may be unable to reach you quickly.

There may be additional benefits and risks to telehealth services that arise from the lack of in-person contact or presence, the distance between you and your provider at the time of service, and the technological tools used to deliver services. I will assess these potential benefits and risks, sometimes in collaboration with you, as we work together.

Assessing Telehealth’s Fit for You

Although it is well validated by research, service delivery via telehealth is not a good fit for every person. I will continuously assess if working via telehealth is appropriate for your case. If it is not appropriate, I will help you find in-person providers or shift to in-person sessions.

Please talk to me if you find the telehealth media so difficult to use that it distracts from the services being provided, if the medium causes trouble focusing on your services, or if there are any other reasons why the telehealth medium seems to be causing problems in receiving services.

Bringing your concerns to me is often a part of the process. You also have a right to stop receiving services by telehealth at any time without prejudice.

Your Telehealth Environment

You will be responsible for creating a safe and confidential space during sessions. You should use a space that is free of other people. It should also be difficult or impossible for people outside the space to see or hear your interactions with your provider during the session. If you are unsure of how to do this, please ask me for assistance. A headset is recommended to further protect your privacy.

My Communication Plan

In the notice of privacy practice there are emergency and mental health crisis services listed. In addition to those plans, I have the following policies regarding communication:

- The best way to contact me between sessions is by email steve@familiesfirsttherapy.org or telephone 505-504-5449. *Please note that neither email nor my telephone number are to be used during a crisis.*
- I will respond to your messages as soon as I can. Please note that I may not respond at all on weekends or holidays.
- Our work is done primarily during our appointed sessions, which will generally occur during my business hours Monday thru Thursday from 10am to 7pm.
- Contact between sessions should be limited to confirming or changing appointment times.

Our Safety and Emergency Plan

As a recipient of telehealth-based services, you will need to participate in ensuring your safety during mental health crises, medical emergencies, and sessions that you have with me.

- I will require you to designate an emergency contact at the intake appointment. You will need to provide permission for me to communicate with this person about your care during emergencies.
- I will also develop with you a plan for what to do during mental health crises and emergencies, and a plan for how to keep your space safe during sessions. Crisis services include Telephone crisis lines (800-273-8255 or 505-277-3013), calling 911, or go immediately to the nearest Emergency Room.
- Except where otherwise noted, I employ software and hardware tools that adhere to security best practices and applicable legal standards for the purposes of protecting your privacy and ensuring that records of your health care services are not lost or damaged.
- As with all things in telehealth, however, you also have a role to play in maintaining your security. Please use reasonable security protocols to protect the privacy of your own health care information. For example: when communicating with me, use devices and service accounts that are protected by unique passwords that only you know. Also, use the secure tools that I have supplied for communications (e.g. Vsee). For more information please see my specific recommendations for electronic security and safety here: <http://steveratcliff.com/techrec.pdf>

Recordings

Please do not record video or audio sessions without my consent. Making recordings can quickly and easily compromise your privacy and should be done so with great care. I will not record video or audio from our sessions.

Insurance Coverage

Currently services are only permitted to residences of New Mexico and Florida due to licensure law restrictions. Many insurance companies cover some or all of the cost of services delivered by telehealth. Currently, many New Mexico insurance plans including New Mexico Medicaid cover telehealth services. If you have questions about coverage of telehealth, please contact your insurance company.

Copays and deductibles will be due at the time of service during a telehealth session similar to an in-office session. These fees will be collected by cash, check, credit card, HSA, or FSA means.