



Board of Behavioral Sciences



1625 North Market Blvd., Suite S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834
(916) 574-7830
www.bbs.ca.gov

Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Department of Consumer Affairs

Guidance Document **Use of Online-Only Therapy Platforms to Provide Psychotherapy**

The utilization of online-only therapy platforms, both as a place to obtain mental health services for consumers, and as a place of employment for mental health providers, has significantly increased since the COVID-19 State of Emergency in 2020.

As the use of these platforms becomes common, the Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board) has been monitoring them to identify if any consumer protection concerns have arisen from their increased use.

The jurisdiction of the Board lies with licensing and regulating competent marriage and family therapists, professional clinical counselors, educational psychologists, and clinical social workers in order to protect the public from incompetent, unethical, or unprofessional practitioners. Although the Board's regulating authority does not extend directly to businesses or companies, the Board's licensees and registrants who are working for these companies are still required to follow the telehealth [laws](#) established by the Board. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Determining the location of the client to ensure they can legally provide telehealth services in the jurisdiction where the client is located.
- Ensuring that there is an emergency response plan in place in case of a client emergency.
- Following the Board's telehealth laws and regulations.
- Being familiar with the therapy platform's policies regarding custodian of records, and practitioner access to client records.
- Ensuring sessions and client records are secure and confidential, in alignment with their professions' code of ethics.
- Verifying the client's identity in order to protect confidentiality.

When considering the use of an online platform to deliver services, a licensee should determine whether the online platform will provide them with the necessary tools to uphold their legal obligations. The Board has compiled numerous resources to serve as a guide for those who are providing services via telehealth or supervising those who are

doing so, and also for consumers who are seeking mental health services via telehealth. Further information and resources can be found here:

- [Providing Mental Health Services via Telehealth](#)
- [Supervision via Videoconferencing](#)
- [Considering Mental Health Services via Telehealth as a Consumer](#)