

Virginia Board of Counseling

Guidance on Technology-Assisted Counseling and Technology-Assisted Supervision

The Board's regulations for Standards of Practice (18VAC115-20-130) are prefaced by the following:

The protection of the public health, safety, and welfare and the best interest of the public shall be the primary guide in determining the appropriate professional conduct of all persons whose activities are regulated by the board. Regardless of the delivery method, whether in person, by phone or electronically, these standards shall apply to the practice of counseling.

Therefore, the standards of practice set forth in section 130 of the regulations and in the Code of Virginia apply regardless of the method of delivery. The Board of Counseling recommends the following when a licensee uses technology-assisted counseling as the delivery method:

1. Counseling is most commonly offered in a face-to-face relationship. Counseling that from the outset is delivered in a technology-assisted manner may be problematic in that the counseling relationship, client identity and other issues may be compromised.
2. The counselor must take steps to protect client confidentiality and security.
3. The counselor should seek training or otherwise demonstrate expertise in the use of technology-assisted devices, especially in the matter of protecting confidentiality and security.
4. When working with a client who is not in Virginia, counselors are advised to check the regulations of the state board in which the client is located. It is important to be mindful that certain states prohibit counseling by an individual who is unlicensed by that state.
5. Counselors must follow the same code of ethics for technology-assisted counseling as they do in a traditional counseling setting.

Guidance for Technology-assisted Supervision

The Board of Counseling recommends the following in the use of technology-assisted supervision:

1. Supervision is most commonly offered in a face-to-face relationship. Supervision that from the outset is delivered in a technology-assisted manner may be problematic in that the supervisory relationship, client identity and other issues may be compromised. Face-to-face means the in-person delivery of clinical services. For the purposes of meeting the 2,000 hours of face-to-face client contact, in-person may include the use of secured technology that maintains client

confidentiality and provides real-time, visual contact between the resident and the client. Telephonic services may be used toward ancillary counseling service hours.

2. The supervisor must take steps to protect resident confidentiality and security.
3. The supervisor should seek training or otherwise demonstrate expertise in the use of technology-assisted devices, especially in the matter of protecting resident confidentiality and security.
4. Supervisors must follow the same code of ethics for technology assisted supervision as they do in a traditional counseling/supervision setting. Licensed residents in counseling, marriage and family therapy and substance abuse treatment are allowed to provide tele-assisted counseling to clients in Virginia. The resident must adhere to standards of practice, ensure confidentiality, and seek training as needed to be competent in the services they provide.
5. The Board of Counseling governs the practice of counseling in Virginia. Counselors who are working with a client who is not in Virginia are advised to check the regulations of the state board in which a supervisee/resident is located. It is important to be mindful that certain states may regulate or prohibit supervision by an individual who is unlicensed by that state.