

Guideline

Title:	Telepsychology	
References:	RCWs 18.83, 18.130, and 70.02 RCW, and chapters 246-16 and 246-924 WAC; American Psychological Association's <i>Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology</i> , Adopted July 31, 2013.	
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Background

Advances in technology and changes in how people communicate have made common the delivery of psychological services using telecommunications technologies. This approach, commonly referred to as telepsychology, is beneficial if properly used because it may increase access to psychological services, decrease the cost of accessing psychological services, and speed up the delivery of psychological services and patient-client records. The Examining Board of Psychology (Board) developed this guideline to describe how telepsychology will be regulated consistent with existing statutes and rules governing the practice of psychology in Washington State. The Board recognizes that technological changes occur rapidly, so this guideline provides general principles that are technologically neutral rather than focusing on the use of any specific telecommunications technologies.

Definitions

“Telepsychology” is the delivery of psychological services using telecommunications technologies.

“Telecommunications” is the preparation, transmission, communication, or related processing of information by electrical, electromagnetic, electromechanical, electro-optical, or electronic means.

“Telecommunications technologies” include but are not limited to telephone, mobile devices, interactive video conferencing, email, chat, text, and Internet (e.g. self-help websites, blogs, and social media).

“In-person” means interaction(s) between the psychologist and the client-patient that occur in the same physical space, and does not include interactions that occur through the use of telecommunications technologies.

“Remote” refers to the delivery of a service or services at a different site from where the psychologist is physically located. The term remote includes no consideration related to distance.

“Practice of psychology” has the same meaning as RCW 18.83.010(1) (a)(b)and(c). “Telepsychology” is included within the practice of psychology and is not a separate discipline.

Guidelines for Appropriate use of Telepsychology

A. Licensure: Psychologists utilizing telepsychology on patients-clients in Washington State must be licensed to practice psychology in Washington State or have a temporary permit to practice psychology in Washington State. Washington State licensed psychologists are encouraged to be familiar with and comply with relevant laws and regulations when providing telepsychology services to patients-clients across state and international borders.

B. Standard of Care: Psychologists using telepsychology will be held to the same standard of care as psychologists providing services in-person, including the requirement to meet technical, clinical, confidentiality, and ethical standards otherwise required by law. Some elements of the standard of care as applied to telepsychology include:

- 1.) Psychologists take reasonable steps to ensure they are competent with both the technologies used and the potential effect of the use of telepsychology on clients-patients and auxiliary staff.
- 2.) Psychologists obtain and document informed consent that specifically addresses the concerns that may be related to the telepsychology services they provide. Such informed consent should be developed so it is reasonably understandable to clients-patients. Informed consent may include, but is not limited to:
 - a.) The manner in which the psychologist and client-patient will use particular telecommunications technologies, the boundaries that will be established and observed, and procedures for responding to electronic communications from clients-patients;
 - b.) Issues and potential risks surrounding confidentiality and security of client-patient information when particular telecommunication technologies are used (e.g., potential for decreased expectation of confidentiality if certain technologies are used);
 - c.) Limitations on the availability and/or appropriateness of specific telepsychology services that may be hindered as a result of the services being offered remotely.

C. Confidentiality of Data and Information: Psychologists practicing telepsychology take reasonable steps to protect and maintain the confidentiality of data and information relating to their clients-patients. When necessary, psychologists consult with technology experts to augment their knowledge of telecommunications technologies in order to apply adequate security measures in their practices that will protect and maintain the confidentiality of data and information related to their patients-clients.