



Services provided during COVID-19 pandemic

During this period of change and uncertainty it is important to look after your emotional health and wellbeing. We are available to continue working with you in counselling as you are ready.

Telehealth are appointments that use computers or smart devices, allowing us to connect using both audio and video. Of course phone appointments are also available. We can guide you in setting up any of the options listed below.

Here are some questions and answers which you might find helpful as you think about what type of contact you would like.

What type of appointments are available?

Skype – Download and install Skype on your device and create an account, then connect with your therapist's Skype account. It is free to have a Skype account and to make video calls. At your appointment time your appointment, the therapist will ring you from Skype. Give your therapist a little time to connect as they are likely switching between different modes of contact and this could take a few minutes. During the Skype appointment the therapist will be able to share files with you if you are working on any worksheets or there is a useful resource, they want to work with you on. There is also a chat section for you to use text to communicate if need be. If you use Skype it is likely it will only be the audio and video you will need to use.

Zoom – You need only click on a link provided in an e-mail to you. You do not need to have a zoom account as the link will just open the room for you using whatever internet browser you have. The therapist has a zoom account, which is a little like a meeting room and they create the

appointment time and embed a unique code into the link they send you so that only you and them are present in the meeting room. Within this meeting space you and the therapist will also have the use of a whiteboard just like in the office space at Regent Street. Like Skype there is also a chat column for text chat but again it's unlikely you will use it.

Face-time – This is just like a phone call but the camera is also used to transmit the visual image. This is only available if you have an apple device, unlike Skype and Zoom which will work across a variety of devices.

Phone – This is just what is says. Your therapist will call you at the time of your appointment on whatever phone you receive your reminder messages on. If you want a different number called for your appointment then now is a good time to either call and let us know.

What will I need for these appointments?

If you are using a **telehealth** appointment then you will need a device, like a home computer (PC or Mac), laptop, tablet, or smart phone. Whatever device you decide to use should have connection to the internet, an internet browser installed for use, a camera if you intend on using the camera to enable a visual connection to your therapist, and sound capabilities.

If I try tele-health and it doesn't work for me, can I change to phone?

Absolutely. You can also change between the different platforms within telehealth and trial them until you find what works best for you. We recommend not changing mid appointment though as it interrupts the flow of therapy.

What if I have technical difficulties using telehealth?

If you are having trouble using telehealth then your therapist will try and trouble shoot the problem if it is an easy fix but if it takes longer than five minutes they will abandon the telehealth and call you on the phone. Whilst the preference is to be able to use telehealth, the greater preference is that you get your whole appointment time with your therapist.

Most problems can be worked out quickly and usually after the first session things run smoothly. Of course, there is a large strain on the NBN network and phone networks as we are all moving to rely on them more for health and non-health related meetings.

How will my clinician look after my privacy if we are using telehealth or phone appointments?

The same privacy concerns and policies apply online. The above mentioned, telehealth options have all been researched as being secure connections between the two parties only and the connection does not go through a third party. Just like in the office space your therapist is ensuring that the sound travelling is minimised using music outside the therapy space. A headset might also be used to minimise sound in the room. Your counsellor has a private room to conduct sessions from.

There is no change to your client file and notes during this change of service.

Where should I be when we are having the appointments?

It is ideal that you be in a private room in your house. Please do not use an open space where other people in your house may enter. If your computer or device is stationary, then ask others who share the space to create privacy for you by leaving the space. If you can not find a secure place at home, then in a parked stationary car could be a suitable alternative. Clients in the past have also gone walking using their headphones and sticking to quieter areas. If you are choosing this option, then please be mindful of social distancing and the NSW guidelines issued around leaving your house.

How can I create a safe space?

Spend time before the appointment setting up your space. Pour a glass of water, make sure tissues are nearby, and have a comfortable seat.

Put up a Do Not Disturb Sign on your door and tell others you do not want to be interrupted.

Sound barriers can be helpful, so play some music right near your door to muffle any sounds from your room. Make sure it is not the same device you are using for the session though, or the therapist will not be able to hear you over the music. You could also roll up a towel and place it underneath your door to prevent sound travelling out. Of course, using a headset will also help reduce the sound.

Finally, remember therapy can be challenging and after therapy you we are often a little raw. Create time and space for you to transition back into your day after the session ends. You might try listening to some music, doing a puzzle, colouring-in or drawing, or another task that isn't too cognitively or

emotionally challenging. This is a time to be gentle and kind to yourself and give yourself some space, so don't try and socialise, study or work too soon.

Fees/Payment for online

Medicare services are currently only available to be used if we are bulk billing our clients, which does increase the financial pressure on our service given our office expenses have not changed. At this time our services will be bulk billed provided you have an existing mental health care plan from your GP and you have sessions available to use.

NSW Victims Services - phone and telehealth are already an available option, at the counsellor's discretion, and we will make decisions with you about the nature of our counselling contact, giving special consideration to physical and emotional safety issues and wellbeing.

If you are accessing Private Health insurance for your sessions, or other insurance schemes, I encourage you to contact your insurer and ask if they are allowing Telehealth options with an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and what their limits are.