

ALABAMA BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Licensed Interns, Associates and Marriage & Family Therapists

FROM: Keith E. Warren, *Executive Director*

DATE: March 27, 2020

RE: COVID 19 State of Emergency Updated Amended Health Order/Teletherapy

Good Afternoon,

Governor Ivey has announced today during an 11:00 a.m. news briefing that all non-essential businesses are to close beginning tomorrow, March 28, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. and remain closed until April 17, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. As devastating as this news is to the profession, everyone in Alabama now has the same directive to close their business until April 17, 2020. The Board Office remains open to staff only (closed to the public) to assist you via phone or email. If you need to apply for a new license, please visit the form's section of the Board's website. You may print an application to submit via mail to the Board's office located at 2777 Zelda Road, Montgomery, AL 36106.

Individuals licensed as of March 27, 2020 may conduct teletherapy and telesupervision services before completing necessary telehealth training requirements as long as, during this period of state of emergency, the licensee produces evidence of continuing to complete training that will count toward the 15-hour training requirements. The training that is conducted during this time should be submitted to the Board upon the Board's request. This allowance of concurrent service provision and training will be in effect until the lifting of the state of emergency orders in Alabama. Licensees who wish to continue providing telehealth services beyond this period, will be expected to have the required training as outlined in the current Rules and Regulations, or to cease to provide these services until full training is achieved. The Board strongly recommends that licensees follow HIPAA guidelines in providing telehealth services, even in light of the relaxing of HIPAA guidelines by HHS. We are experiencing an unprecedented time of global crisis, which makes us all more vulnerable to malicious online activity that may jeopardize not only our clients' safety but our own as well, thus making HIPAA compliance and online safety precautions more important than ever. All other current guidelines for the ethical practice of teletherapy remain in effect.

Furthermore, All required continuing education hours for license renewals can be completed through distance learning (i.e. online CE activities) from March 27, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

The Board also takes the opportunity to remind licensees that the requirement for 15 hours of training in telehealth is independent of whether continuing education credits are received for the activity. Licensees must be able to demonstrate that the telehealth training completed covers the content areas specified in section 536-X-8-.09 of the Rules and Regulations, regardless of whether continuing education credits were received for the training.

The following are some resources for obtaining the telehealth training, you will need to make your own determination of which resource is best for your practice. The resources listed here are merely for your information as the Board does not endorse or recommend any particular training (nor shall this listing constitute an approval of any CEs).

Introduction to Setting Up a Telebehavioral Health Practice webinar, Dr. Katherine Hertlein
<https://aamft.org/Events/Coronavirus-Event-Status-Updates.aspx?WebsiteKey=8e8c9bd6-0b71-4cd1-a5ab-013b5f855b01>

ACA also offers a basic 4-part online training on starting a telehealth practice: <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/mental-health-resources/trauma-disaster/telehealth-information-and-counselors-in-health-care>

PESI is providing their 12 CE online telehealth training for deeply discounted pricing: Go to <https://catalog.pesi.com/item/52191>, register, and enter the code at check out.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/05/ce-corner>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/millennial-media/201901/13-benefits-teletherapy-therapists> See list of resources at the end of the article.

<https://www.zurinstitute.com/course/telehealth/>

<https://telehealth.org/>

If you have questions or additional concerns, please follow the guidelines set forth by the following entities: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, Alabama Department of Public Health <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/index.html> or your County Health department <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/about/health-departments.html>.

We will continue to keep you updated as we continue experiencing the COVID 19 Pandemic. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in this matter.