

Information for Students about Tele-Mental Health Services Western Illinois University

We are pleased to have the opportunity to serve you. The Counseling Center is now offering distance counseling via telephone or video conferencing to enrolled students or students who are registered for fall semester and who reside in Illinois. Considerations for extension may be made depending on Illinois mandates for social distancing. Please review this document completely for expectations of tele-mental health services, as well as instructions on how to schedule.

Eligibility for Tele-mental Health Services

To be eligible for services, students must:

- Be enrolled at Western Illinois University
- Reside in Illinois (This may change if Illinois laws are revised during this national emergency)
- Meet screening criteria
- If it is determined that your needs exceed the scope of service or expertise available from the Counseling Center, or that your needs cannot be adequately met by participating in tele-mental health counseling, we will assist you to identify an appropriate referral to meet your needs.

Limitations of Tele-Mental Health Services

Tele-mental health services are an alternative form of counseling with some differences from traditional counseling. For example:

- Due to the use of technology, video counseling may have disruptions in service and quality of service.
- If you are having suicidal or homicidal thoughts, acute psychosis, or physical complications from an eating disorder, tele-mental health services are not appropriate for your needs. In this case, you will be referred to an in-person local mental health resource in your community.

What to Expect Before You Begin Tele-Mental Health Services

- You will need to provide information about how to contact you. You will also need to provide information regarding emergency resources in your current location.
- We will send you a secure link through the UCC portal to the Zoom appointment. If you are using the phone, you will provide us with a phone number at which to reach you. Please keep the link to your appointment private and do not share with others.

Approximately 20-30 minutes before your first appointment you will need to visit ucconline.wiu.edu. At this website you will click on forms. You will find a Consent for Treatment that you must complete.

- Appointments will be cancelled if you fail to show to your scheduled meeting within the first 10 minutes of the meeting. You will need to contact UCC to reschedule for a later date.

What to Expect in Your First Tele-Mental Health Appointment

Tele-mental health sessions are held via Zoom or phone.

- If using Zoom, it is recommended that you sign on to your account at least 5 minutes prior to your session start time. You must initiate the connection at the time of your session by clicking the link provided by the Counseling Center staff.
- You will be asked to authenticate your identity and will be asked to show your Student ID. Please be aware that you should have no one else in the room and may be asked to scan the room.

In the first tele-mental health appointment, your counselor will begin by reviewing the informed consent forms you filled out and asking a few screening questions to assure that tele-mental health services are appropriate for you.

Emergency Management for Distance Counseling

In the event of an emergency, and for your safety, the following measures are important and necessary:

- Your counselor will need to know your consistent location/address for counseling sessions, and will need to know if this location changes.
- Your counselor will request that you identify someone whom you trust. You will be asked to provide contact information and to give your counselor permission to contact that person, should your counselor believe you to be at risk. You will verify that this emergency contact person is able and willing to go to your location in the event of an emergency, and if your counselor deems necessary, call 911 and/or transport you to a hospital.

Backup Plan in Case of Technology Failure

- The most reliable backup to Zoom is a phone. Therefore, it is recommended that you always have a phone available, and that you provide your counselor with your phone number.
- If you get disconnected from a video conferencing session, re-start the session. If you are unable to reconnect within five minutes, your counselor will call you at the number you provided.

If you would like to schedule an appointment at this time, please call the University Counseling Center at 309-298-2453.