

## LABSWE Consumer Information Regarding Distance Therapy

The Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners (LABSWE) recognizes that face-to-face contact for the purposes of psychotherapy is optimal but that it is not always possible. The LABSWE provides the following information to Louisiana consumers who choose to seek therapy or counseling using telephonic or other electronic means (Distance Therapy).

Individuals who provide social work services, including psychotherapy or counseling, either in person, over the Internet or by telephone are required by Louisiana law to be licensed and credentialed by the LABSWE. The licenses or credentials issued by the LABSWE to Louisiana social workers who have met and maintained legally required qualifications are intended to safeguard Louisiana consumers against unauthorized, unqualified and improper social work practices and also to identify the scope and limitations of authorized practices. In Louisiana, the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), the Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and the Certified Social Worker (CSW) are authorized to practice Distance Therapy. A LMSW or CSW who engages in Distance Therapy must be an employee in an agency setting (or under contract with a governmental agency) and practice with supervision from a LCSW.

The licenses and credentials issued by the LABSWE only authorize Louisiana social workers to practice social work within the State of Louisiana. A Louisiana social worker may, on a limited basis, engage in Distance Therapy with an established Louisiana client who is temporarily outside of Louisiana. However, a Louisiana social worker who otherwise engages in Distance Therapy with a non-Louisiana client in another state or country, must also be authorized to practice social work where that client is located. Because the licensing laws and regulations for practicing social work will vary from one state to another, non-Louisiana consumers seeking Distance Therapy should require confirmation from their therapist that he or she is authorized in that particular location to provide Distance Therapy.

A social worker who uses electronic means to provide services shall abide by all regulations of their professional practice, understanding that their practice may be subject to regulation in both the jurisdiction in which the client receives services and the jurisdiction in which the social worker provides those services.

Cautious consumers seeking therapy over the telephone or the internet should consider the following:

1. Verify that the practitioner has a current and valid license in the State of Louisiana.
2. A social worker who provides Distance Therapy using the Internet shall have a web site which must include information relative to the credential the social worker holds, their physical location, their contact information, contact information for the licensing Board(s) that have issued the social worker a credential, the Professional Disclosure Statement and this Consumer Information Regarding Distance Therapy.
3. Distance Therapy may not be conducted through the exchange of typed or printed data, E-mails or instant messages and may not be used for group therapy or counseling.
4. The LMSW or CSW must be an employee in an agency setting (or under contract with a governmental agency) and practice with supervision from a LCSW.
5. Understand the fee that you will be charged for the services rendered.
6. Fully comprehend how and to whom the fee is paid.
7. Be satisfied with the methods used to ensure communication with and by the therapist will be confidential.
8. Make yourself aware of the risks and benefits of doing therapy so you can make an informed choice about the therapy or counseling to be provided.
9. According to Louisiana Social Work Practice Act, Rules, Standards and Procedures Rule 111 Section F, social

workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship with a valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the plan for services, relevant costs, reasonable alternatives, the client's right to refuse or withdraw consent, and the timeframe covered by the consent. Social workers shall provide clients with an opportunity to ask questions.

If the client does not have the capacity to provide consent, the social worker shall obtain consent for the services from the client's legal guardian or other authorized representative.

If the client, the legal guardian or authorized representative does not consent, the social worker shall, at the earliest opportunity, discuss with the client that a referral to other resources may be in the client's best interest.