

# FACEBOOK LIVE SERIES WITH MOLLY MACDONALD



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## COVID-19 CRISIS EPISODE #2

Under the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act 2020 and guidelines issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on March 17, they waived key requirements under telehealth so that Medicare beneficiaries can receive services in their homes with fewer restrictions including:

- Recipients can now receive care in their homes.
- Provider practice locations aren't restricted.
- Practitioners can use smartphones with audio and video capabilities enabled.
- HIPAA rules are temporarily relaxed (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS))
- Office of Civil Rights gave notice that during the COVID-19 emergency it will waive penalties for HIPAA violations by providers in connection with the "good faith" provision of telehealth.
- There is a temporary lift on audits.
- Billing remains the same.

### **Does this mean my mental health provider will just talk to me on FaceTime?**

- Maybe. Providers are still trying to use HIPAA compliant platforms like Doxy.me and Zoom. This protects your privacy as much as possible. Using HIPAA compliant platforms also paves the way for establishing telehealth visits even after the crisis.

### **So I can be anywhere? Even in public?**

- Probably not. We need to create a safe, quiet and confidential space just as if you were seeing your mental health provider in their office. Providers will also try to do the same.

### **Who has been approved to provide psychotherapy services that can be reimbursed by insurance?**

- Licensed Psychologists and Licensed Clinical Social Workers.
- Other professions are also working on reimbursement and changes are being made daily.

### **What psychotherapy services can be reimbursed by insurance?**

- Intakes, individual sessions, group therapy sessions, family sessions and testing.
- Telephone sessions are in the process of being worked out but have not yet been approved.

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## **How can I find out if my insurance company covers psychotherapy or telehealth services?**

- Call your insurance provider directly or go to their website.
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid has a list of all approved telehealth services for those on Medicare and Medicaid (March 1st, 2020).
- American Psychological Association is working on making a list of all telehealth approved services by state.

## **What should I be looking for when searching for a mental health provider?**

- You can start with your insurance company for leads.
- Find a mental health provider who has a background in treating those with cancer or a health psychology/social work background.
- If you are in treatment, or recently out of treatment, contact your cancer center to see if their mental health providers are offering telehealth services.
- If you have previously seen someone in the community, contact them again and see if they are taking on patients and using telehealth services.
- Check credentials. Make sure they hold a legitimate degree. All licensure board websites can confirm if they have an active license.
- Practicing over state lines is still being worked out during this time. Look for a provider who is licensed in your state. Psychologytoday.com is a good start. Some websites like Better Help might also be appropriate for you.
- You also do not need to go through insurance. You can find providers in the community to provide services out of pocket. You then do not need to adhere as closely to the insurance reimbursement guidelines and the provider will just be following their own ethical guidelines.

## **I have already heard a lot about reducing stress and managing anxiety and depression during this time (i.e. acknowledging feelings, distraction, mindfulness, importance of maintaining a routine, eating right, exercise and getting a good night sleep). Is there anything else that can help reduce anxiety?**

- Advanced directives. Our brain likes to think of worst-case scenarios, so it can help to reduce anxiety by just rolling with those sometimes. Writing down exactly what you would want and not want should you become diagnosed with COVID-19 will help induce a sense of control. Many medical providers treating patients during this time are doing just this.