



## **COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Practices**

**Updated 3-18-20**

The safety and health of our staff, clients and the larger community remains our number one priority. At the same time, we recognize that access to quality mental health care is vital during this time.

We are committed to finding a way to continue to serve our clients, without putting anybody at unnecessary risk. To do so, we are making some temporary changes in our operations, and following the accommodations that have been suggested by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organizations (WHO) in order to limit the spread of this virus and do our part to protect the vulnerable populations in our state.

**Waiting rooms:** We are temporarily removing our toys, books, games, puzzles and magazines from the waiting rooms. The coffee and water machines will not be operating. All “high touch” areas are disinfected no less than twice a day (light switches, door knobs, railings, chair arm rests). Hand sanitizer is available in our waiting rooms, as our tissues and baby wipes (should you wish to use these to open the bathroom door, to hold the railing etc.).

In keeping with the most recent CDC guidelines we have made modifications to limit gatherings to no more than 10 people. We are limiting entrance into our facility to staff and clients only. All meetings with outside sources have been cancelled. Clients are asked to come alone to appointments. Minor clients are asked to limit who accompanies them to the appointment to one parent or guardian. No friends, siblings, spouses or other sources of support. We have temporarily turned other empty offices/conference rooms into alternative waiting rooms so that we can limit the number of people waiting in one space. Clients are asked to come no earlier than 5 minutes before their appointment, and to leave within 5 minutes of their appointment ending.

**Cancellations:** During this outbreak, Benson Psychological Services, PC will waive all cancellation fees for patients who cancel their appointment due to illness. Please contact our office at (701-297-7540) if you need to cancel. No show fees will continue to be charged.

**Restricted Access:** In addition to the restricted access already mentioned above, we are requiring staff and clients to stay home if any of the following conditions apply:

- You are over 60
- Your immune system is compromised by another illness, or treatment for that illness
- You have an existing illness, such as heart or lung disease that places you at higher risk
- You have a fever, cough or shortness of breath
- You have traveled or visited locations within the last 2 weeks that are known to have multiple cases/major community spread of COVID-19
- You have family members who have symptoms of this illness
- You are, or you live with, a health care worker taking care of infected persons
- You are responsible for the direct daily care of someone who is elderly or vulnerable to the disease

**Services by Telepsychology:** Some insurance companies are temporarily lifting restrictions on services by Telepsychology. Staff at Benson Psychological Services, PC have personally reached out to other major insurance companies requesting that they follow suit. The American Telemedicine Association and the American Psychological Association (APA) has also created teams of dedicated professionals working tirelessly on advocating for insurance reimbursement for Telepsychology services during this time.

Should you wish to use this option, please access our Telepsychology Informed Consent on our website, or by asking the receptionist, and contact your provider to discuss this option. In order to use this option you must have a password-protected, secure internet connection, (not public or unsecured WiFi) and anti-virus/malware that is up-to-date. There are other requirements as well, most are readily and easily achievable, and all are at no cost to you.

**Resources for Updated Information:** During times such as this it is important to seek information from reputable and reliable sources. Misinformation and rumors do not serve the goal of protecting the public. Furthermore, it is important consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19, especially for children. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Below are some sources of information we recommend.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>
- Mayo Clinic  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/symptoms-causes/syc-20479963>
- North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH): <https://www.health.nd.gov/>
- Minnesota Department of Health: <https://www.health.state.mn.us>
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**Recommended Preventative Measures:** Although there is no vaccine available to prevent infection with the new coronavirus, you can take steps to reduce your risk of infection. WHO and CDC recommend following the standard precautions for avoiding respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if your hands aren't clean.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items if you're sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you often touch.
- Stay home from work, school and public areas if you're sick.

**Resources for Mental Health and COVID-19:** Here are some good resources regarding how to talk to your children about COVID-19, the mental health aspect of COVID-19, and how to deal with the social distancing that accompanies it

- American Psychological Association:  
<https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/social-distancing>
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: <https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak\\_factsheet\\_1.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf)
- CDC: How to talk to children about the Coronavirus  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

