**DCCCA Behavioral Health Services**

**Guidelines for Virtual Treatment and Counseling Services[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Virtual counseling services are a viable option to support individuals who cannot or prefer not to participate in traditional office-based counseling. The approach used in virtual services may be internet based tele-video or by telephone. Services offered virtually may include:

* Comprehensive assessment for substance use and mental health needs
* Individual substance use or mental health counseling
* Group counseling for substance use or mental heath
* Intensive outpatient treatment (3 hours daily, 3 days/week) for substance use
* Person Centered Case Management (substance use services only)
* Peer Support individual and group connection (substance use services only)

Available services will vary by DCCCA location and payer approval.

What service participants can expect from DCCCA staff

DCCCA counselors, therapists and case managers are licensed by the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board and appropriately credentialed to provide substance use and/or mental health treatment services.

Peer Support Specialists are certified by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services and offer their personal lived experience as an opportunity to help others.

Tele-video virtual services will use Zoom, a HIPAA compliant technology that reduces the risk confidential information can be inadvertently shared on the internet. In the event that a technology other than Zoom must be used, DCCCA staff will identify that technology and obtain verbal consent from the participant to continue with services.

DCCCA staff who are engaging in virtual services will ensure that:

* They are sitting in a private room.
* They are alone, unless the service is being monitored by his or her supervisor or a student intern is present. The staff will inform the participant in advance if someone is present.
* No one outside of the private room can hear the confidential conversation.
* Confidential documentation will be maintained in DCCCA’s electronic medical record and no written documentation will be viewable beyond the counselor. Any required hard copy documentation will be kept in an individual, participant specific file and locked in a cabinet until it can be scanned into the electronic record.

What DCCCA staff will expect from service participants

* The participant must confirm at the beginning of each session:
* His or her identify
* The address and phone number at which they are participating in services in order to facilitate a call back if connection is disrupted (individual sessions only).
* He or she is in a private room
* No one else will have the ability to hear the confidential conversation
* No one else is either listening on another phone line (telephonic service) or in the room outside of camera view (video service)
* The participant and staff will reach agreement at the first session what the next steps are if a telephone or video call is abruptly disconnected.
* If during the session DCCCA staff have assessed the participant may be at risk of harming self or others, and the session is disconnected, DCCCA staff will contact the participant’s emergency contact and/or 911.
* The participant will call or email his or her counselor in advance if an appointment cannot be kept.
* The participant will review with his or her counselor applicable consents, releases of information, and other admission materials. (These materials may be found on the DCCCA website or may be emailed or mailed to the participant.) The participant will offer verbal consent to engage in services, to acknowledge receipt of information, and to advise with whom information can be shared. This consent will be documented in the participant’s medical record. [[2]](#footnote-2)
* The participant will provide information relevant to determine appropriate payer source and potential fees and provide verbal consent for the established fee agreement.
* Participants with out of pocket expenses will pay for services prior to or at the time of service, using the agreed upon payment method.
* Participants engaged in virtual group therapy will maintain confidentiality for all group participants, including but not limited to sharing names and information with others.

1. This guide for DCCCA staff and service participants has been developed in response to the need for virtual treatment and counseling services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be revised as needed to incorporate modified regulations and policy. Please contact the DCCCA Director of Behavioral Health for future updates. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Verbal consent is allowable during the COVID-19 pandemic. When normal services commence, written consent will be requested from the participant to continue services. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)