

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY
DURING A PANDEMIC:



PAA Member Survey

Third Edition

June 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Psychological practice in Alberta continues to be impacted by the pandemic but we are beginning to see some clear trends and statistically significant (SS) differences.

For this third monthly survey, respondents reported increased workloads (SS) and trends to increased social commitments. 96% had transitioned to telepsychology with considerable variance in perceived privacy needs, information security, and overall working conditions in these home offices. There is a trend to increased confidence in home offices.

Psychologist respondents were personally impacted by the pandemic but perceived those negative impacts to be even greater for those to whom they provide professional service. Self-care, psychological health, and overall functioning being reported as lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Despite a trend towards increasing confidence in telepsychology, and reports that most will integrate telepsychology into their practices post-pandemic, results indicated a perception that telepsychology did not appear to improve efficacy or connectedness of services provided.

Most respondents felt that they had good access to needed pandemic-specific resources, but some continue to report that the influx of information was overwhelming. The most accessed resources came from PAA and BMS (SS increase). Advocacy was considered essential by most respondents and resources shared as infographics, social media, and ENews all had high usage rates.

24% of respondents have reached out to PAA directly and have found the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances.

Overall, the first 12 weeks of the pandemic appear to indicate ongoing negative impacts for psychologists, even more so for those served by respondents. Participants quickly migrated to home offices and telepsychology and concerns about those work conditions appear to be decreasing. Targeted resources and PAA staff support continue to be appreciated and rated highly.

BACKGROUND

An online survey sent to members of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta in June 2020 sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 12 weeks after the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This replicates surveys sent 4- and 8-weeks post-declaration.

These surveys aim to help PAA understand, and respond to, the impacts of this pandemic on psychological practice in Alberta, particularly as there are currently no known models on how to operate as a psychologist or as a professional association during a pandemic.

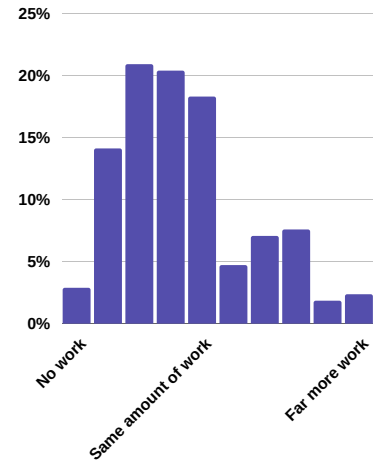
This survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications and professional support for them.

There are 3 questions in each of 7 areas with an opportunity for member's comments and qualitative feedback at the end of the survey. Response rate for questions varied from 101 to 400 participants of PAA's 2 600 members.



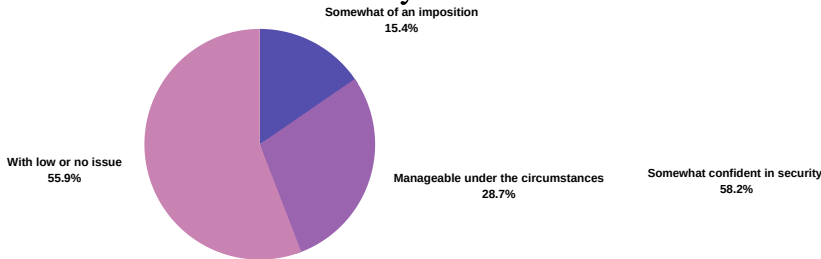
Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

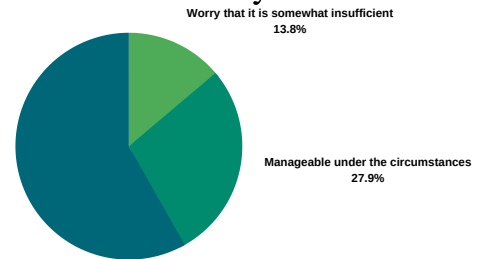


Of the 73.89% of respondents that transitioned to a home office, how easy has it been to address:

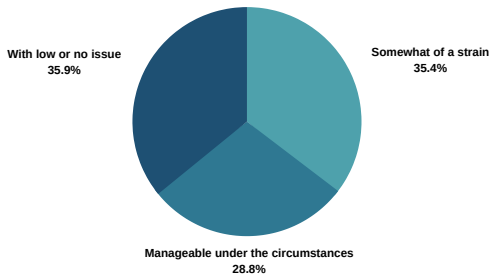
Personal Privacy:



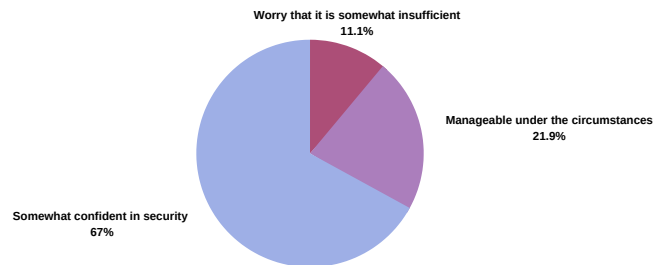
Client Privacy:



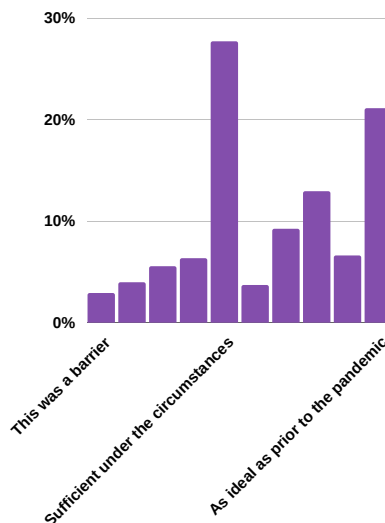
Current Working Conditions:



Security of Information:



Have you felt you had sufficient access to the professional resources that you required (files, testing materials, books, etc.)?

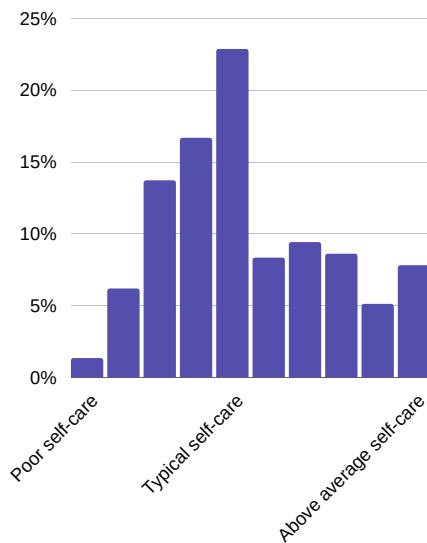


Respondents' overall confidence in home office work has increased across the board, though workload has increased to a statistically significant level.

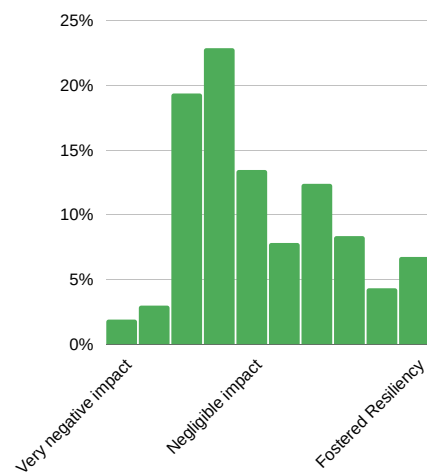
Area 2: Personal Impacts

In considering yourself as a person, and your family, how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted your:

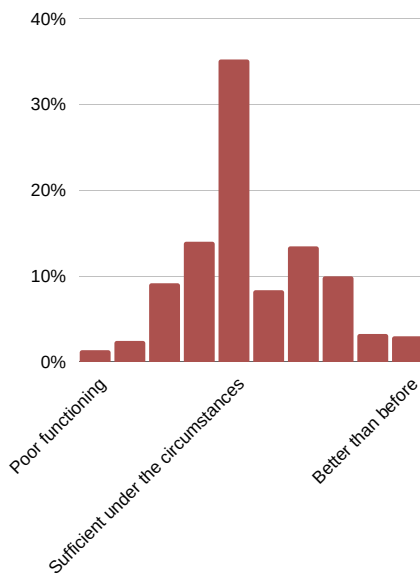
Self-care:



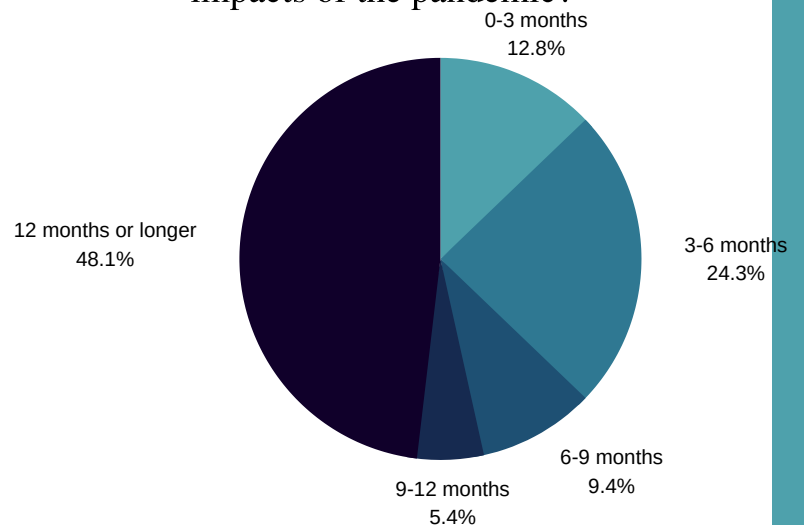
Psychological health:



Functioning (employment, relationships):

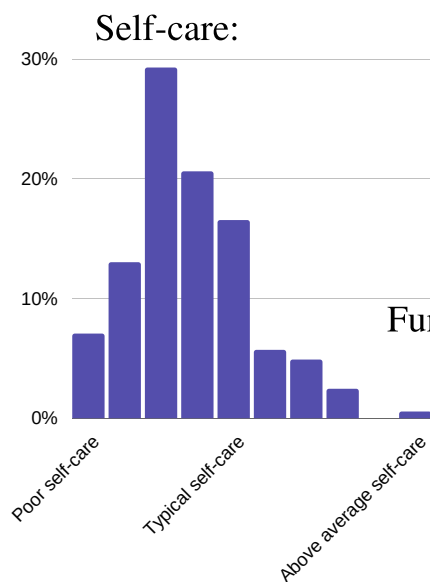


How long can you sustain business practices to provide adequate client care given the current financial impacts of the pandemic?

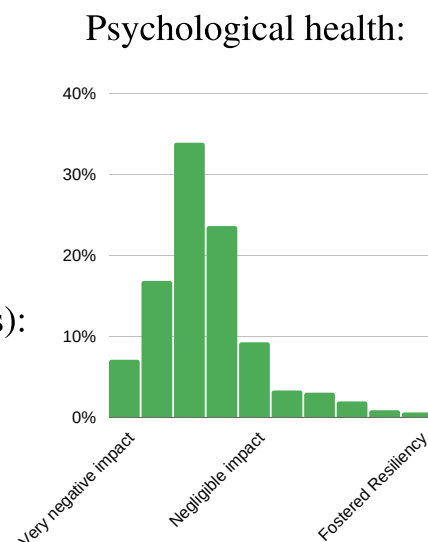
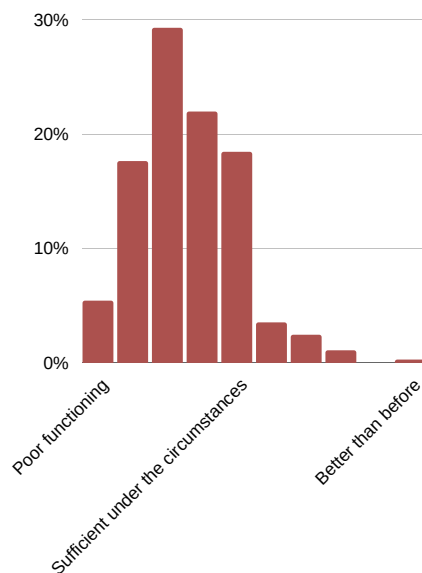


Area 3: Perceived Impacts

In considering those you serve (clients, students, research participants, etc.), how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted their:



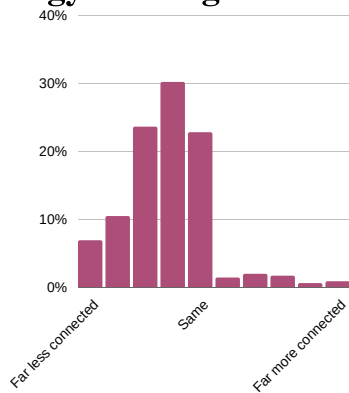
Functioning (employment, relationships):



Changes in impacts remain non-significant within both psychologists and those they serve. Many respondents reported that functioning, health, and resiliency among clients varies greatly and is difficult to capture on a single scale.

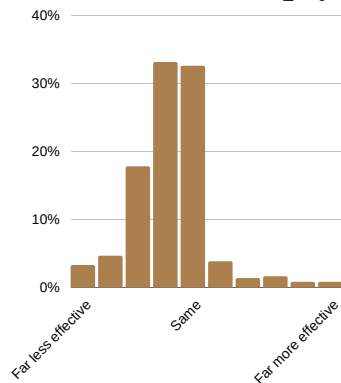
Area 4: Telepsychology

How connected did you feel to clients/students/other service recipients during telepsychology compared to non telepsychology offerings?

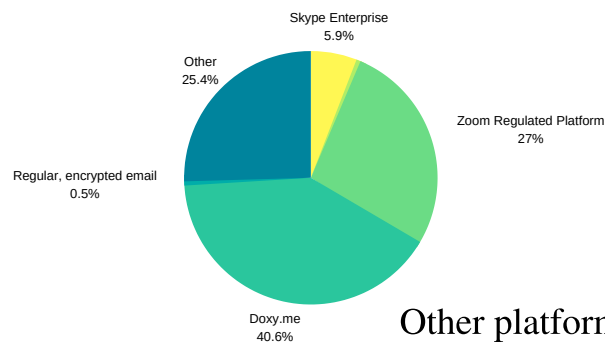


96.44% of respondents migrated to (or were already using) telepsychology services, up 4.24% from survey one

How effective did you perceive your telepsychology services to be in relation to previous similar non-telepsychology services?

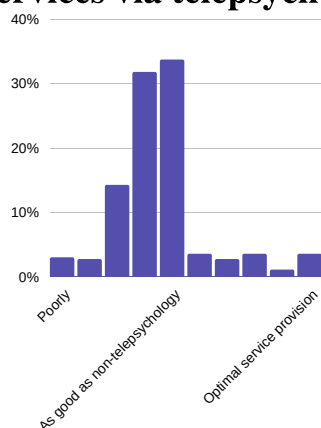


Which platform do you use?

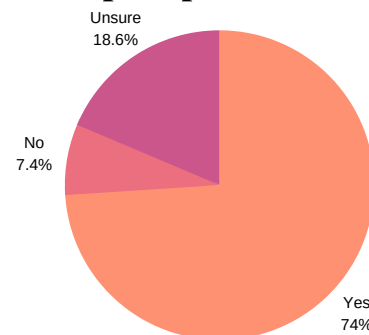


Other platforms included Jane.app, Google Meet, and telephone calls

How well do you feel that you were able to provide services via telepsychology?



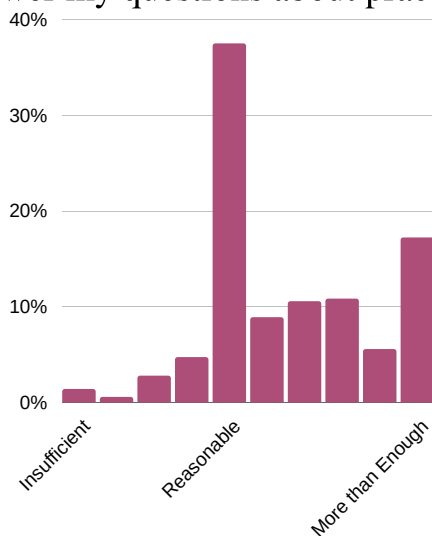
Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?



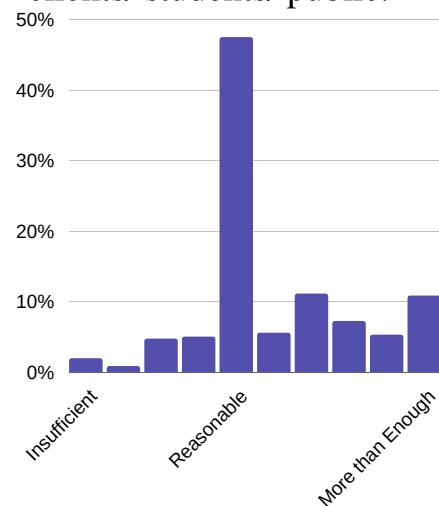
Area 5: Practice Clarity

86.11% of respondents accessed the PAA's online COVID-19 resource page. They found that:

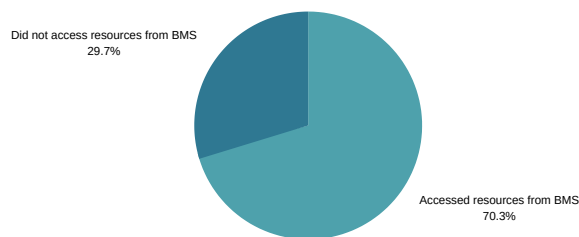
There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.



There were useful resources for my clients/ students/ public.



Statistically significant more respondents (70.28%) accessed the BMS CPA/ CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications.



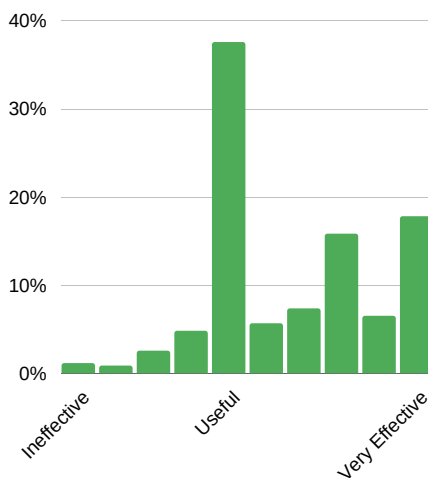
33.61% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere, from sources including the APA, Jane.app, AHS, CAP, the CPA, CMHA, and PESI.

Overall confidence in, and perceived effectiveness of, telepsychology continues to increase and more respondents may implement telepsychology post-pandemic. Some clients report it is greater for convenience, though assessments and clinical practice with children is very limited online. The data from communications questions continue to be obstructed by the collection error. Meaningful data will be produced by survey 5.

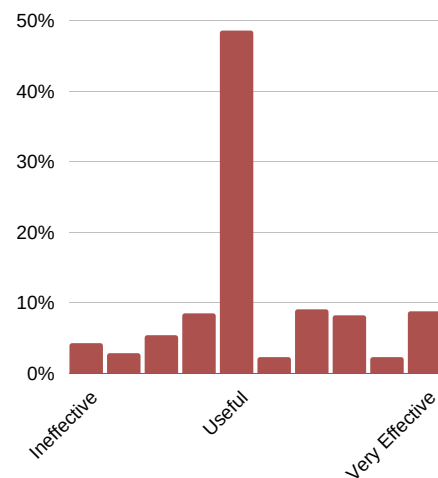
Area 6: Communications

Respondents were asked whether they accessed various forms of resources, and how effective they found them to be. Regarding advocacy, members were asked for awareness rate and how necessary they found them to be.

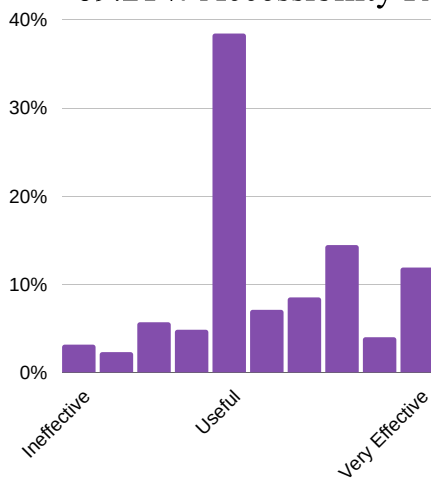
1. Regular ENews:
96.33% Accessibility Rate



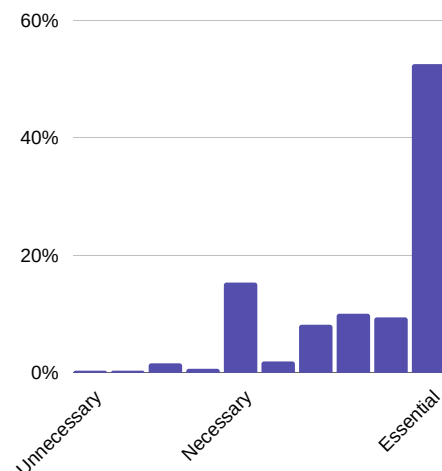
2. Social Media:
43.50% Accessibility Rate



3. Infographics, posters, and videos:
69.21% Accessibility Rate



4. Advocacy:
92.81% Awareness Rate

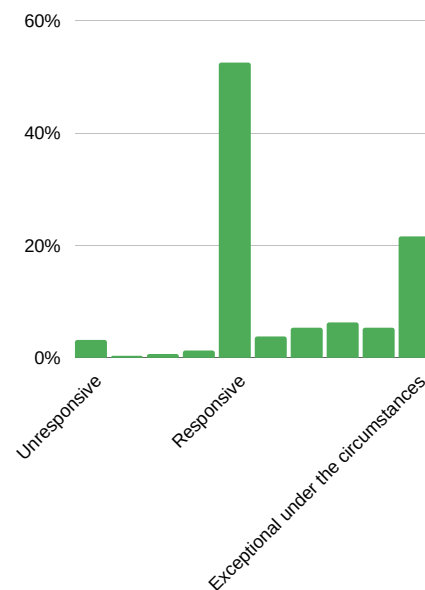


Area 7: Professional Support

26.25% of respondents reached out to PAA directly, via phone or email, to access staff support services, up 10.60% from survey one.

We at PAA encourage our members to reach out, via email or phone, if they have questions or concerns. We are unfortunately not able to address these if they are sent in via the qualitative section of the pandemic survey.

They found the PAA staff team to be:



Some thoughts from our members:

My practice currently consists solely of psychoeducational assessment. I did not feel comfortable doing this by telepsychology.

I will be providing telepsychology services post pandemic because some clients prefer it for convenience, even though I have some concerns about it's efficacy.

While there is evidence of resiliency among clients I serve, I am also seeing the impact of COVID on mental health and a widening of the crack so to speak.

While the PAA communications have been helpful, I really appreciate that the frequency has decreased.

A note on statistically testing: to determine significance of results, a two-tailed t-test for paired means was performed, comparing from the inaugural edition, with $p < 0.05$.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Associations benefit members by being a source of learning, connection, and support. These needs are highlighted during times of crisis such as this pandemic. This third monthly survey remains an informative glimpse into the experiences and needs of psychologists in relation to this pandemic. Of note, we are beginning to see clear trends (increasing confidence in, and use of, telepsychology and home offices and more direct contact with PAA) and statistically significant differences (increasing workloads and access to BMS resources) from the initial survey done 4 weeks into the pandemic.

Recommendations

Advocacy

Continue active advocacy efforts. Members value the role of advocacy and being members of an association creates a collective that can both represent the voices of members and those we serve but can also tap into the wealth of experience and expertise of members to inform advocacy that matters.

Connection

Facilitate member networking and connectivity. This pandemic has negatively impacted members. Given the benefits of associating with a group with similar experiences, it is key for members to be able to share experiences, connect, and be validated that there are common experiences – and that no one psychologist is in this alone. There is power in association membership and the associated sense of belonging.

Member Support

Continue to develop, and prioritize, member supports. In a crisis the association has a role in supporting members as they retool their professional practices to thrive. This means information, resources, and support to adjust to new practices. Key is providing reliable, relevant, and accessible information, training, and services. Highlighted in this was tools to optimize telepsychology practices and guidelines for return to in-person practices during a pandemic. Members are best served in this regard by a wide range of communication tools (including website, email, social media, infographics, online meetings, webinars). Psychologists are respected and essential health professionals. They deserve, and appreciate, a professional association that is highly responsive and member-service oriented.

Research

Continue this research and employ knowledge transfer with the results. Not enough is known about telepsychology in Alberta. Members benefit from evidence-based practices and outcome informed telepsychology service information. Even in non-pandemic times, telepsychology will continue to allow psychologists to serve those who might otherwise have limited access. And our professional is well placed to lead in this regard.