



## “Psychology Works” Fact Sheet: Psychological Practice and the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 has demonstrated profound impact on the health of individuals and communities and on the delivery of health services, at precisely the time when health services are what individuals need, both for their physical and mental health. Health care leaders and governments are advising and requiring changes to all manner of services so that face-to-face contact between people is minimized in the service of flattening the curve of virus transmission.

In recent years, there has been a burgeoning interest in digital services that support telepsychology and growing evidence that psychological treatments can be effectively delivered in this format<sup>1</sup>. However, embracing telepsychology can be daunting, especially for private practitioners who do not have institutions on which to rely for assurance about the privacy and security of any digital service they employ. Further, there are unique skills, competencies and considerations to practicing telepsychology. Concurrently, however, with COVID-19, psychology practitioners are challenged to provide continuity of care to their patients. Telepsychology would certainly enable them to deliver services without the COVID-19 transmission risks when services are delivered face-to-face.

### Psychology Organizations and COVID-19:

1. Some of Canada’s regulatory bodies of psychology across the country have issued information and updates about COVID which practitioners can consult:
  - a. College of Psychologists of Ontario <http://www.cpo.on.ca/Templates/Default-Inner-Page.aspx?id=2262>
  - b. College of Psychologists of British Columbia <https://collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca/covid-19-updates/>
  - c. Psychological Association of Manitoba <https://www.cpmb.ca/>
  - d. College of Psychologists of New Brunswick <https://www.cpnb.ca/2020/03/18/information-to-members-re-covid-19/>
2. The CPA, as well as some of Canada’s provincial and territorial associations of psychology, have also posted resources about COVID-19:
  - a. Canadian Psychological Association <https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/>
  - b. Psychologists Association of Alberta <https://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/>
  - c. British Columbia Psychological Association <https://www.psychologists.bc.ca/blog/covid-19-resources-preparedness>
  - d. Association of Psychology of Newfoundland and Labrador <http://www.apnl.ca/>
  - e. Ontario Psychological Association <http://www.psych.on.ca/>





## Resources and Factors for Practitioners to Consider when Employing Digital Services

1. Be informed about the skills, considerations and competencies of practicing in the digital world. This would be important for you as the service provider and for any student or other provider who delivers the service under your supervision. The following link posts a number of recent article and guidelines on the topic <https://kspope.com/telepsychology.php>
2. BMS, the insurance broker who provides the professional liability insurance program to CPA members and the provincial and territorial member associations of the Council of Professional Associations of Psychology (CPAP), along with Gowling WLG, the preferred legal provider that services the program, have authored an article on continuity of care and virtual health services. This article is specific to the Canadian context and practitioners are well advised to review it [https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Insurance/COVID-19\\_Telehealth%20Resource\\_2020%20\(PSY\).pdf](https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Insurance/COVID-19_Telehealth%20Resource_2020%20(PSY).pdf)  
It covers key topics such as
  - Being licensed where you are practicing from and where your services are received.
  - Ensuring your professional liability insurance is in place to cover you from where you deliver service and where it is received.
  - Ensuring the privacy and security of any digital platform you employ and that you collect informed consent from your patients to deliver services to them in this manner.
  - Ensuring that any other means of communicating with patients (e.g. email) enables you to comply with applicable privacy legislation.
  - Whether or not you provide telepsychology services during the time of pandemic, you should consider all means of continuity of care for your patients.
3. The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), the Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations (ACPRO), and the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) all have guidelines on telepractice that practitioners are advised to consult.

<https://cpa.ca/aboutcpa/committees/ethics/psychserviceselectronically/>

<http://www.acpro-aocrp.ca/documents/ACPRO%20Model%20Standards%20for%20Telepsychology%20Service%20Delivery.pdf>

<https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology>

4. The regulatory bodies of psychology in Canada's Maritime provinces have a Memorandum of Understanding around telepsychology practice across their jurisdictions <http://www.nsbep.org/mou-with-memorandum-of-understanding-telepsychology-now-includes-all-maritime-provinces/>





5. The American Psychological Association (APA) has posted its Office and Technology Checklist for Telepsychology Services. <https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/telepsychological-services-checklist> Informed consent checklist for telepsychology services <https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/informed-consent-checklist>

*This fact sheet has been prepared for the Canadian Psychological Association by Dr. Karen Cohen, CEO, Canadian Psychological Association.*

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Your opinion matters! Please contact us with any questions or comments about any of the *Psychology Works* Fact Sheets: [factsheets@cpa.ca](mailto:factsheets@cpa.ca)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2014-50698-007>  
<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1271635&dswid=6311>

