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## **North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization, LLC**

Section 1000 - Administrative: Telemedicine, Telehealth or Video-Based Technology

Authorizing Source: HCA Contract

Approved by: Executive Director Date: 4/29/2025

Signature:

### **POLICY # 1028.00**

### **SUBJECT: TELEMEDICINE, TELEHEALTH OR VIDEO-BASED TECHNOLOGY**

#### **PURPOSE**

To establish the North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization's (North Sound BH-ASO) policy on the use of telemedicine, telehealth or video-based technology.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**Telehealth** means services provided via a telecommunication system.

**Telemedicine** is when a health care practitioner uses Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant, interactive, real-time audio and video telecommunications (including web-based applications) or store and front technology to deliver covered services that are within his or her scope of practice to a client at a site other than the site where the provider is located.

**Video** Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, means the delivery of behavioral health services through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communications between the person and a Designated Crisis Responder (DCR), for the purpose of evaluation under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 71.05 or 71.34.

#### **POLICY**

North Sound BH-ASO promotes the use of telemedicine/telehealth for General Fund-State (GFS) and Block Grant funded services under the guidance of applicable WACs, RCW, Health Care Authority (HCA) published billing and guidelines, as well as industry best practices standards.

Using telemedicine, telehealth or video-based technology when medically necessary may improve access to essential behavioral health services that may not otherwise be available due to travel or other restrictions.

#### **PROCEDURES**

##### **Crisis Services**

1. Telemedicine or telehealth services for Behavioral Health Crisis Service must be delivered in accordance with WAC 246-341.
2. DCRs use of video for initial evaluation for emergency detention under RCW 71.05.150 and 71.05.153 must follow HCA guidelines for DCR's conducting video ITA evaluations and relevant HCA DCR protocols. In addition:
  - a. Where an in-person interview is not safe or feasible, the DCR may conduct an interview by secure video if the technology is available.
  - b. The DCR office may work with facilities to incorporate video assessments into regional practice

and develop protocols that address all the elements of the assessment to include paperwork, communication, collection of collateral information, and coordination of treatment for the client.

- c. DCR's will ensure that a licensed health care professional or professional person is present with the individual who can adequately and accurately assist with obtaining any necessary information is present with the person at the time of the interview.
  - i. Professional person is defined under RCW 71.05 and includes those professions under the mental health professional and substance use disorder definitions.
- d. The use of video technology for DCR evaluations under RCW 71.05 or 71.34 does not alter legal timelines or negates service delivery obligations in North Sound BH-ASO crisis services policies and procedures.

### **Non-Crisis Services**

Telemedicine/telehealth for non-crisis services that do not require face-to-face treatment, must be delivered in accordance with service provisions defined in North Sound BH-ASO's contracts, policies and Supplemental Provider Service Guide (SPSG).

1. Behavioral Health outpatient services funded within available GFS resources may be delivered utilizing telemedicine/telehealth if the service does not require face-to-face treatment.
2. Facility based Crisis Stabilization services shall not substitute telemedicine/telehealth services.

### **State Funded Specialized Programs**

North Sound BH-ASO Block Grant funded programs can significantly differ in scope of work.

Telemedicine/telehealth must be delivered in accordance with expected program outcomes, scope of work and North Sound BH-ASO policies and procedures. Telemedicine/telehealth shall not substitute face-to-face interventions for certain treatments.

### **Encounter Data Reporting**

Telemedicine/telehealth services that are subject to encounter data reporting must be in accordance with North Sound BH-ASO's data dictionary.

### **Telehealth Security**

Providers utilizing telemedicine, telehealth or video-based technologies must ensure HIPPA compliance requirements.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None