As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic Vision Towards Peace Counseling Services has taken the necessary measures and precautions to ensure the safety of our staff and clients while we remain in compliance. This document outlines the changed made within our organization.

Effective March 16, 2020 clients were converted to telehealth services. All clients were sent a mental wellness check in letter on March 16, 2020 checking in on them, providing them with resources and introducing them to telehealth services.

**Office Sanitation**

The contracted cleaning service has disinfected the entire office and continues to do so on their bi-weekly visits. In addition, extra cleaning supplies have been purchased and placed in the storage cabinets of the bathroom and kitchen areas. Clorox wipes, face masks and hand sanitizer are available in the front office as needed.

**Office Hours and Access**

The front office staff (Office Coordinator and Billing Specialist) have remained fully functional and in the office during the pandemic. The office hours are 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. There were a few clients that opted to remain coming in face to face. We ensured that those clients were scheduled, and outside of our two office personnel they were the only other persons in the office. During sessions individuals (clinician and client) remain within 6 feet of the each and wear PPE. Clinician’s continue manage their own schedules and schedule their clients according to their availability. Our services are still being offered and conducted on weekends as well.

**Supervision for Our Clinicians**

Supervision is offered to our clinician’s weekly supervision via Zoom. Supervision is every Thursday at 4 p.m. Our clinicians are required to attend at least 2 supervision sessions monthly. This provides them the opportunity to discuss pertinent case information, receive support and conduct a check in for themselves as this pandemic has taken a toll on everyone. Staff were offered reimbursement for any fees incurred to use the necessary applications to perform their duties and continue seeing clients virtually

**Telehealth Consent to Treatment**

Our case documents have been amended to reflect the new telehealth service being offered. Our consent to treatment reflects the telehealth services. The consent to treatment also explains the responsibilities of the client as it relates to their treatment such as; the proper device the is needed, the risks of using devices for sessions, the need for quiet and private setting etc…

**Encounter Forms and Signatures**

A telehealth specific encounter form has been created which reflects a plethora of information as it pertains to the location of the clinician, client, devices being used etc…

Currently clients do not have to sign encounters forms as the signature is being waved due to the pandemic. Once we resume normal business practices, we will collect client signatures via a signature pad. All offices will be equipped with a device to electronically collect signatures.

**Telehealth Services**

As a response to the pandemic we took the safety precaution which gave our clinician’s the option to work remotely. Majority of our clients have been converted to telehealth services. These services are being provided via Zoom, Google Voice, and telephone conversations. Clients are provided a new consent to treatment which reflects the telehealth services consent. Clients are made aware that they must have a quiet and safe setting in order to complete their sessions virtually.

**Telehealth Services for Group and Family Sessions**

The bi-weekly Women’s Group continues to conduct sessions via zoom. Family sessions are also conducted via Zoom. The same guidelines apply to these sessions; the client needs the proper device, a quiet and private background, and only the consented clients are to be involved in the session.

**Clients that Did Not Want Telehealth Services**

For various reasons such as home privacy issues some clients opted to not participate in telehealth services. These clients reported that they wanted to resume services once face to face services are reinstated. These clients continue to receive check-in phones and mailers. There are a few clients that do not have access to the necessary technology to complete their sessions virtually. They continue to come in office and complete their session with the clinician. The proper safety precautions are implemented such as; proper PPE, client and clinician maintain 6 feet distance amongst themselves, and only the individual being serviced is permitted in office. There are no group or family sessions taking place in office.

**Discharging of Clients**

There were clients that left our practice during this time for various reasons. We have completed the discharge paperwork including the summary and plan. The client’s information is purged and placed in our discharged client file cabinets.

**New Clients**

Our practices is currently excepting new clients during the pandemic. They must call into our office and speak with our Office Coordinator. She takes the necessary information to invite them to our client portal. A potential client must have the appropriate device and a valid email address to access our client portal. The client must complete their intake documents and upload their identification and insurance before they can be scheduled for an appointment. Once their information is complete and verified they are scheduled for their appointment.

**Appointment Reminders/ Notifications**

Clients receive a text reminder 24 hours prior to their appointment which also provides them the opportunity to cancel or reschedule. Clients also receive an email notification with their Zoom meeting information prior to their scheduled appointment.

**Copayments/ Fees**

Clients invoices are created via our invoicing system. They also have the option to call the office during business hours and complete payment via the phone. During this time, we have reduced or eliminated the copayments of clients that have a loss of income due being directly impacted by the pandemic.

**Internal Audit and Compliance Procedures**

Clinicians are responsible for maintaining their own schedules. However, the front office and billing continue to conduct daily audits to ensure that the documentation remains in compliance. The clinicians schedule is crosschecked with their documents entered into Thera Nest, and the service rendered is written in by the office staff to reflect so (if the client still has a paper chart).

**Electronic Records Management**

The practice moved to electronic records management via Thera Nest. Client information was imported into the system. The usage of Thera Nest affords our clinician’s and staff the opportunity to seamlessly provide the same quality level of care while remaining virtual. All the clinician’s pertinent case functions are being completed via Thera Nest which include but are not limited to treatment session notes, assessments, and case notes.

Every client has a client portal through which they can complete and access documents such as;

* Intake forms
* Consent to treatment
* Assessments
* Documents for Community Resources
* Release of Information

**Community Resources**

A complied list of community resources and recommendations for various needs of clients ranging from food banks, childcare, clothing, weight loss etc. has been created. This information available at a client’s request via our client portal in Thera Nest.

**Client Safety/ Suicidal Ideation**

A safety policy and procedure has been developed for clinician’s and staff related to completing safety checks on clients that may be in distress or experiencing a crisis.

**Resignation of a Clinician**

There was a clinician that left our practice on April 30, 2020. The clinician informed her clients personally that she was leaving our practice. Her clients were subsequently mailed letters of announcing her departure and were informed that there would be a new clinician coming to the practice. The clients that wished to remain with the practice contacted the office and were scheduled with our new clinician. Those that did not wish to remain were discharged. The clinicians’ clients were transferred to our new clinician that joined our practice on May 1, 2020. Prior to the clinician leaving she met extensively with our new clinician to ensure that she received the pertinent case information necessary to services the clients she would be seeing.

**New Hire**

A new clinician that joined our practice on Friday May 1, 2020. This clinician has not yet been credentialed by CCBH \*however she is seeing clients on a weekly basis that are CCBH members\*. Even though our new clinician has not been credentialed we did not want to disrupt our client’s mental wellness care especially during this time of uncertainty. We are not billing for these services as we are unable to however, our clients are receiving the continuity of care that is necessary to support their mental health. The new clinician received the clients from our former clinician that left our practice on April 30, 2020. Prior to starting the new clinician met with the former clinician extensively to review case files and receive pertinent case information that would help with her transition of new clients. The clinician also shadowed some sessions with the former clinician in order to gain some familiarity and insight into the new clients she would be servicing.