Providing Technology for Remote Counseling Services

Many mental health care providers transitioned to remote counseling during the current pandemic, meeting either by telephone or video. This allowed them to seamlessly continue counseling sessions while ensuring the safety of both themselves and their clients. These meeting platforms provide an effective way to meet, and both are approved for use by the Maryland Department of Health. However, sometimes clinicians will specifically recommend the use of one medium over another based upon case circumstances.

Recently, such a case presented itself. Pro Bono Counseling’s clinical staff was contacted by a woman in her mid-50’s who requested counseling. She had experienced trauma while immigrating from West Africa and due to a series of misunderstanding. Since she did not speak English, Pro Bono Counseling arranged for an interpreter and connected her with a volunteer licensed mental health therapist.

Given the nature of her past trauma, the clinician felt it was important that video be utilized during her counseling sessions so she could observe her responses with visual cues, such as body language. Not having access to a smartphone or computer, or a way to utilize technology at a facility such as a library, PBCP provided her with a tablet computer and Internet hotspot so she could meet on-line with her therapist to take full advantage of her counseling sessions.

“This client really appreciated everything that was done for her,” explained PBCP Clinical Manager Ana Carrera.

“Since her therapist recommended tele-therapy for the best possible outcome, we wanted to ensure that she had all of the necessary tools for her care.”

Pro Bono Counseling was able to provide these technology tools at no cost to this client thanks to a grant from the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle. A portion of a 2020-2021 grant provides funds to PBCP to help pay for client transportation to counseling sites. Since the pandemic decreased client transportation needs, the organization agreed to allocate those funds to technology for the same result—an in-person connection.

“We are so appreciative that the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle not only awarded us this grant but also enabled us to reallocate the funds to meet this need,” stated PBCP Executive Director Amy Greensfelder. “This type of partnership enables Pro Bono Counseling to fulfill its mission of improving access to mental health care.”

WARMLine Hours Expanding

Beginning in May 2021, Pro Bono Counseling (PBCP) will be extending the hours of its WARMLine service. The WARMLine is staffed by mental health professionals and is available to anyone who is feeling anxious, sad or depressed and wants someone to talk to. Currently, WARMLine hours are weekdays from 10AM to 6PM. Soon evening and weekend hours will be added for increased availability.

To reach PBCP’s mental health WARMLine, call 410.598.0234.

Memorial Fund Supports Youth Mental Health Awareness

Pro Bono Counseling Project (PBCP) recently received a grant from the Matt Golczewski Memorial Fund to help increase awareness among youth of the importance of mental health and seeking care. This donation will support PBCP’s outreach efforts to teens and younger adults.

“We believe there is still work to be done to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health care and treatment, especially among young people,” stated Nancy Golczewski, Matt’s mother. “After researching Pro Bono Counseling and learning about its mission, we feel the organization is working to tackle this important issue.”

Matt Golczewski was 25 years old when he died in 2020 after battling an aggressive form of cancer. His family established the Matt Golczewski Memorial Fund to contribute to the causes that were closest to Matt throughout his life. All funds raised for the Memorial Fund are divided and directed toward scholarships for student athletes, cancer research, and mental health activism.

“We are grateful to the Matt Golczewski Memorial Fund for identifying youth mental health care as a priority and generously donating to Pro Bono Counseling,” said PBCP Executive Director Amy Greensfelder.

PBCP Workshops Enhance Professional Experience

Pro Bono Counseling Project (PBCP) offers a robust schedule of continuing education workshops throughout the year. As a benefit to active PBCP volunteers, these workshops are free, but all clinicians and interested constituents are invited to attend for a nominal registration fee. PBCP’s staff strives to ensure that the workshop topics offered are educational, timely, and relevant to your practice and are presented by experts in their respected fields.

As a continuing education sponsor for the American Psychological Association and the Maryland Boards of Social Work Examiners and Professional Counselors and Therapists, PBCP must maintain certain standards, such as content and learning objectives, and meet additional requirements. All workshops are evaluated at their conclusion to ensure quality levels are met or exceeded and to receive valuable feedback from all workshop participants.

“This presenter was really remarkable and fabulous,” stated one recent workshop participant evaluator. “I think the topics discussed in this talk were really complex and I look forward to more presentations regarding how best to support clients with different intersecting identities and experiences.”

Often times, workshop participants are inspired to continue exploration of a certain topic, so PBCP attempts to facilitate that as well. Supervision, consultation, and independent study groups have developed as a direct result of workshop participation. And most recently, a book group is in its initial stages, forming to expand upon a nature and therapy workshop topic.

“We are committed to not only being a source of quality continuing education offerings but a partner for enhancing professional knowledge and skills,” stated PBCP Clinical Director Sherri Bloom.

Upcoming PBCP Workshops

Friday, April 30 10AM - 1PM Social Justice: Being “JUST” in a Society that is Divided – 3 CEs

Friday, May 14 10AM - 11:30AM ADA 101 for Health Care Professionals – 1 CE

Thursday, May 20 1PM - 2:30PM Black Futures Matter: Understanding Black Youth Suicide – 1.5 CEs

Click here for more information or to register for these workshops.