

Telepsychiatry and Telecounselling

FAQs

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What are Telepsychiatry and Telecounselling?

These terms describe ways of accessing mental health services via secure, online, audio/video-communication systems. You can connect with mental health professionals for support while living/working in any location where this kind of connection with a health professional will work best for you. Reasons people use telehealth (an overarching term for all of these services) include

- continuity of care when they move around a lot,
- living and working somewhere where therapists are not physically present,
- when the locally available services are not preferred (e.g., language, culture or preferred gender of therapist is not available),
- some people just find it more convenient.

Quality mental health care is accessible as long as a internet connection is available.

What kinds of services are available?

Telepsychiatry means consulting a psychiatrist (a medical doctor specialized in mental health, usually an M.D. with additional qualifications after the basic medical degree) online.

Telecounselling is a broad term that potentially describes any kind of remotely-accessed mental health care. Many people use it to describe remotely-accessed talk therapy specifically, usually with a psychologist or other therapist.

Why Telehealth?

UN staff's physical and mental health and well-being is a priority, and easy access to quality care may be unavailable in some duty stations. These options aim to get everyone the support they need. Ideally, staff anywhere in the world can consult a mental health professional of their choice. Telehealth is about *increasing options and choices*.

Is this confidential?

Yes, when accessed via a secure connection/platform, and based on the privacy/confidentiality laws in the country where the provider is based. No information can be disclosed without your written consent. Ask your telehealth provider more about the confidentiality of the service if you have questions.

Can I get medication?

If you are prescribed medication, obtaining it can be a challenge in some areas. The UN Department of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH) can try to facilitate shipments to staff on a case-by-case basis.

I already have a therapist, but am finding it difficult to find a psychiatrist in my area to provide medication and sick leave documentation. Is telepsychiatry accepted for my sick leave recommendation?

Yes. Sick leave certification requires detailed reports from a medical doctor, which for mental health conditions means consulting a psychiatrist. What is most important in these cases is making sure your therapist and psychiatrist are connected.

Who uses these services?

Anyone who has limited options for support due to location or otherwise prefers to consult doctors or therapists online can benefit from telehealth.

How do I access these services and are they covered by my UN health insurance plan?

If you have **Cigna Worldwide**, you can access a mental health professional online via the smartphone app “Global Care On Demand”. For more info, visit Advance Medical (<https://www.advance-medical.net/services/global-telemedicine>).

If you have **Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield**, you can access a mental health professional online via the smartphone app “LiveHealth Online”. For more info, visit LiveHealth Online (www.livehealthonline.com).

If you have **Aetna**, you can access a mental health professional online via the smartphone app “Teledoc”. For more info, visit Teledoc (www.teledoc.com).

If you have an **MIP**, you may not be covered for telehealth services at this time. DHMOSH and the UN Health and Life Insurance Section are currently working to improve coverage to allow for this. All staff members deserve equitable health insurance coverage. Please check with your provider for more details.