



Professional Practice Building - Part 1

Session 5: The Well-Managed Counseling Practice

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with LaVerne Hanes Collins

Question from Joshua Bleustar

Address online therapy using a platform like Simple Practice?

Answer from Presenter

There are a number of online therapy platforms available to counselors today. While there are many similarities between them, there are also differences that a practitioner needs to be aware of. It is highly advisable, before engaging in any online platform, for the counselor to be trained in whatever your state or credentialing body requires for tele-mental health. Then make your selection of online platforms based on the guidance that you receive from that state-approved training.

Question from Marcia Ewing

Is a Business Associate Agreement a requirement for the person, paid or volunteer, who answers the phone?

Answer from Presenter

You should have anyone who touches or engages with client identities and their PHI sign a BAA, even if it's not required.

Question from San Juanita Gutierrez

DBA vs LLC --choosing one over the other?

Answer from Presenter

Each person's financial and tax situation is unique. It is best to make that decision in conjunction with your financial and legal advisors.

Question from Joshua Hulen

I'm especially interested in anything relevant to a home office.

Answer from Presenter

In my personal opinion, home offices are really not advisable. Third party-payers don't typically acknowledge or allow services from a home office. There are liability issues, blurred boundaries of having clients in your home and personal space, potential opportunity therapy to be affected, and the need for a private entrance, local zoning ordinances (business vs. commercial zoning), etc, that need to be considered.



Question from Antoinette Lancaster

Can you send us the ACA link for more information on the requirements/guidelines for contract staff?

Answer from Presenter

Refer to the ACA Code of ethics Standard A.10.b but here are a couple articles that provide some additional interpretation. Basically, if you pay a contract staff person 40% of the hourly payment, it is a relative payment and not a flat payment. Flat, set payments are advisable, so that the counselor doesn't get payments of different amounts for each client, but they get the same amount for every client they see. That way there is no temptation to assign clients based. Alternatively, you can make them paid employees at a set salary or set hourly rate, or you can just rent the space to them for a set fee.

https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/ethics/ethics-columns/ethics_may_2015_fee-splitting.pdf?sfvrsn=624522c_4

https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/ethics/ethics_dec_2014.pdf

Question from Carol Lee

How do you research what CPT codes Insurance companies reimburse?

Answer from Presenter

You can get that information from each insurance company. Ask them for their list of CPT codes and the reimbursement schedule for master's degree (or whatever yours is) practitioners.

Question from Tracy Purvis

Do you recommend any books or authors for learning about business & business management?

Answer from Presenter

I suggest doing a Google search for books on this topic.

Question from Narina Schulz

Any tips on getting out of network insurance claims approved instead of returned?

Answer from Presenter

The best thing is to do as much research upfront as you possibly can. Talk to the insurance companies and find out what you can expect, so you can minimize surprises.

Question from Janine Snader

Do you have any suggestions for solo practice bookkeeping software?



Answer from Presenter

You might investigate the line of products from Intuit (Quickbooks product line), or Peachtree (Sage), or any of their competitors. Also, ask your accountant for recommendations that will meet your specific needs for tax filing for your specific entity type.

Question from Marlene Travis

Why do you need a separate entrance for home offices? Is this a legal requirement? HIPAA? or an ethical requirement for confidentiality?

Answer from Presenter

Here are two articles with things to be considered:

<https://www.zurinstitute.com/homeoffice.html>

<https://tamarasuttle.com/things-to-consider-when-working-from-home/>

Question from Allen Vosburg

Is there anything that you feel that a counselor with a practice should pay attention to or definitely not do?

Answer from Presenter

Pay attention to selfcare and to ethical practices. In private practice, you don't have the organization's umbrella or procedures/policies to protect you or absorb any repercussions of ethically questionable choices. Know the ethics. Have a team of advisors: legal, financial, ethical and clinical. It's very easy to isolate and "silo" in private practice; that is very dangerous.

Question from Andrea Westkamp

Does one need to have some security measures in place? I am thinking of doing sessions at night time with nobody else in the office.

Answer from Presenter

It is always a good idea to have safety precautions in place for the security of your clients and yourself. Keep in mind that while safety is a priority for your well-being, it is possible that having someone such as a uniformed security officer or police officer outside the door, might be uncomfortable for clients. It depends on the environment of your office, your personal comfort level and the known risk factors of your location. ALWAYS have a written policy regarding safety that helps you feel secure and safe, .e.g. when are the doors locked, not keeping large amounts of cash on hand, safety protocols for yourself or any other staff that ever has to be alone in the facility, etc. As a general rule, I do not advise that you make it a practice to be anywhere at night alone where you might be vulnerable or easily targeted/victimized, however you will need to manage the known and



unknown risks specific to you. Choose your location wisely and consider renting in a building with a lobby that has security officers if you intend to work alone at night.

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