

Recommendations for Psychologists in Responding to Coronavirus Concerns

PPA is sending out this tip sheet for psychologists as they prepare for the spread of the coronavirus. The recommendations therein were derived from CDC or other government publications.

In this handout we consider:

- Patient relationships
- Office practices
- Self-Care
- Patient Management Issues

Patient Relationships

- Tell patients to stay home if they feel sick.
- Allow patients flexibility in cancelling appointments due to illness at the last moment without incurring a late cancellation fee.
- Avoid shaking hands or, if you do, have hand sanitizer available.
- Consider telehealth services if indicated for patients who cannot come into the office (See PPA handout on telehealth services).
- Ask patients with high exposure to stay home (High exposure means “prolonged close contact” with an infected person).
- Be prepared to talk to patients about coronavirus. You may prepare for the conversation by listening to the APA podcast on coronavirus anxiety.

Office Practices

- Frequently clean your office with regular cleaning products and use disposable wipes for commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs or computer keyboards.
- Post hand-washing reminders in the bathrooms.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or using air conditioning.
- Limit food sharing among co-workers.
- Instruct staff to practice self-care (see below).
- Inform employees to stay home if they or a family member has a fever or cold-like symptoms. Make certain that the sick-leave policies for your staff are reasonable.
- Some employees with small children may have to adjust their schedules due to the possibility of school or day care closings. Be prepared for that contingency.
- Be prepared to notify patients quickly if their health care professional cannot come to work.

Practice Self-Care

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of paper tissues after one use.
- Seek medical attention if experiencing flu like symptoms. Separate yourself from others if you feel sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- The CDC does not recommend the use of face masks unless a person is already infected and fears spreading the virus to others.

Patient Management Issues

If it is not advisable to see patients in face to face psychotherapy, then psychologists can talk to them about the option of receiving telehealth services. If the patients are not interested or appropriate for telehealth services, then psychologists can speak to them about the risks and benefits of delaying treatment or how to identify and manage any emergencies that may arise.

Reliable Sources

- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [The Pennsylvania Department of Health](#)
- [The Pennsylvania Medical Society](#)