

COVID-19 and Utah Social Work: Telehealth Rules and Recommendations, Navigating CEU's, Licensing Exam Information, NASW-UT Upcoming Events and More

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Like you, we are monitoring the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak very closely. **We care deeply about the health and well-being of our members and the clients and communities you serve.**

We are updating this document regularly. Please visit www.utnasw.org for updates. Look for them under ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Key Highlights:

- ✓ Utah has adopted the requirements and recommendations set forth by the U.S. Dept of Health and Human services regarding the provision of teletherapy.
- ✓ Utah is temporarily allowing in real-time remote supervision without special permission
- ✓ Utah social workers, live webinars that take place **IN REAL TIME** are considered a live, category 1 CEU trainings. So, if they are live (even if they take place via webinar) they will not count toward your 15-hour limit
- ✓ Utah has waived the in-person ceu requirements for social workers renewing their licenses this year.
- ✓ Many insurers have adjusted their telehealth policies. Updates are provided below

REMOTE SUPERVISION

Due to Covid19 supervision CAN be conducted via real time electronic means. When providing services remotely, licensees must protect the security of electronic, confidential data and information.

TELETHERAPY RULES AND GUIDELINES

the COVID-19 public health emergency, DOPL has stated that Utah providers may adhere to the requirements and recommendations set forth by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services: [Telehealth in a Public Health Emergency](#)

Note: This guidance is not intended to alter the applicable standard of practice for any mental health profession. All providers shall be held to the same standards of practice, including maintaining patient confidentiality and recordkeeping, that would apply to the provision of the same services in an in-person setting.

- Per Utah's regulatory board, regulations require mental health professionals be licensed in the state where the client is physically located at the time of service. However, Utah (and many other states) allow exemptions in the event of a national, state, or local emergency, a public health emergency as defined in Section 26-23b-102, or a declaration by the president of the United States. [More information about Utah's exemptions to licensure.](#)
- Medicare recently updated and eased requirements for telehealth, [click here for updates to Medicaid and Medicare.](#)
In summary:
 - CSWs can provide teletherapy to beneficiaries if the client is in their home.
 - They can also see new or existing patients.
 - Telephone/audio only does not appear to be reimbursable; CSWs must use a video-conferencing platform.
 - HIPAA requirements are eased.
- As for teletherapy, we are working hard to ensure state mandated insurance coverage for telehealth/teletherapy AND standardized coding.
- Clients should contact their insurer to verify that they are eligible for telemental health services



BILLING PROCEDURES FOR TELEMENTAL HEALTH

- Most insurance companies require **the code** for the session, **a modifier** that indicates teletherapy and the **site descriptor**.
- Here are the common codes:

-session code (90837)

-modifier (95)

-site descriptor (02).

There continues to be confusion regarding the modifier—NASW is working on this and reaching out to individual insurer.

However, at this point the following insurances are accepting the above billing codes as correct:

-Medicare

-DMBA

-Tricare

-Cigna

-Regence Blue Cross

-EMI

-Cigna (including audio only coverage--will be reassessed May 31st)

-Optum Behavioral Health will reimburse telehealth services which use standard CPT codes and a GT modifier or a Place of Service of 02 for both video-enabled virtual visits and telephonic sessions to indicate the visit was conducted remotely.

[Here](#) is additional information about telehealth parity
[Medicare/Medicaid Telehealth Policy and FAQ's](#)

(a special thank you to Utah social worker and NASW member, Jaime Bacon for providing the above information)



HIPAA COMPLIANT TELEMENTAL HEALTH PLATFORMS

If you choose to provide services remotely, you need to choose a HIPAA-compliant platform such as:

- doxy.me (free for basic services)
- [VSee](https://vsee.com) (free)
- [SimplePractice](https://simplepractice.com)
- [Higher Logic: Converting your in-person training to a Virtual format](#)
- [NASW Guidelines for Teletherapy](#)

Prior to setting up teletherapy with a client please verify the following with your clients:

- 1) They have an electronic device with video capacity. Most people use a laptop or desk top computer. Cell phones can be used if nothing else is available, but the connection on a cell phone is suboptimal
- 2) They have their cell phones charged and close by in case there is a technical problem so if the connection is dropped we can continue via the phone if needed.

Please note:

- If using teletherapy, each insurance plan requires that you go to their website and attest to having an appropriate platform.
- Billing is generally done in the same way as in-person sessions, with some plans requiring a modifier of GT. **Place of service code is always 02.**

TRAINING ON PROVIDING TELEMENTAL HEALTH

NASW Utah has partnered with *The Telebehavioral Health Institute* to provide training and certification on the appropriate and ethical use of telemental health. For more information, click here: <https://telehealth.org/naswut/>

ESSENTIAL BENEFITS FOR COVID TESTING

- Because of the [Travel Health Alert](#) issued by the CDC on March 4, we recommend rescheduling or conducting telehealth/teletherapy sessions, if possible, for clients



who have travelled to countries with a Level 3 Alert (China, South Korea, Iran, and Italy) within the past 14 days.

- Although no vaccine for COVID-19 currently exists, [many Utah insurers are waiving co-pays](#), referral requirements and/or other costs of coronavirus testing, counseling, and treatment.
- Per Utah's regulatory board, regulations require mental health professionals be licensed in the state where the client is physically located at the time of service. However, Utah (and many other states) allow exemptions in the event of a national, state, or local emergency, a public health emergency as defined in Section 26-23b-102, or a declaration by the president of the United States. [More information about Utah's exemptions to licensure.](#)
- Here is the most updated information on [Medicare and Essential Health Benefits](#) for COVID-19 testing, etc. [Medicarecovid](#) is also an excellent resource.

STATUS OF NASW-UT UPCOMING EVENTS

- The Utah County Lunch and Learn scheduled for March 18th and the St. George branch meeting for April **have both been cancelled.**
- The March 28th licensing prep course will be held via a Zoom format, and has been rescheduled to April 4th. Books were sent to registrants on March 26th.
- If you are planning a training, and you want to convert it to a virtual format instead of cancelling or postponing, please [click here](#)
- If you have an approved NASW workshop, please email us if you want to convert the training to an online format. We will waive the fee.

ASWB AND SOCIAL WORK LICENSING EXAMS

Unfortunately, ASWB has temporarily suspended social work licensing exams. Due to increasing concern for the health and safety of our candidates and our employees and in response to government guidance and difficulty procuring the critical hygienic products that keep our test centers safe, we are temporarily closing our U.S.- and Canada-based testing centers starting Tuesday, March 17.



Candidates can reschedule their exams for appointments starting April 16 and beyond if conditions allow. For information on global regions outside the U.S. and Canada. For

updates and additional information, please [click here](#) For additional questions, please reach out to VUE Peterson Testing Centers or [ASWB](#).

Apologies, but NASW-UT is unable to provide further information regarding this issue, please contact ASWB directly

CEU'S

- Live webinars that take place **IN REAL-TIME** are considered a live, category 1 CEU trainings. If they are live (even if they take place via webinar) they will not count toward your 15-hour limit
- However, DOPL has waived live workshop requirements for social workers renewing their licenses September 30th, 2020.
- Utah NASW has partnered with California NASW to provide a catalog of online courses! Take a look here: [NASWCA Online Course Catalog](#)
- You can convert your training to a virtual format [click here](#) for more information from Higher Logic
- Through April 30th, NASW-UT will waive the \$15 fee to approve continuing education for online or home study. Regular application fees still apply. If you
- want a previously approved application considered for online/home study approval, please email us the following: 1) title of the workshop, 2) sponsor, 3) contact person and a copy of the assessment tool used to evaluate content mastery.
- If you are applying for original approval, please follow the instructions on the application.
- Again, you do not need to pay the additional \$15 online/homestudy fee.

DISEASE TRANSMISSION AND TREATMENT

- COVID-19 is generally spread through respiratory secretions (droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person.
- Stay home if you have influenza-like symptoms, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath or if you've travelled to countries with a [CDC Level 3 Travel Health Alert](#) (currently China, South Korea, Iran, and Italy) within the past 14 days.
- [Avoid touching your face](#) (nose, mouth, and eyes)
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds (upgrade your handwashing by singing or humming the chorus to one of these [popular songs](#)) or use a [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

National NASW has put out a [practice alert for social workers](#) concerned about the spread of COVID-19. Please take a moment to review this document.

The Utah Department of Public Health (UDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) should be your go-to resources to remain updated about the novel coronavirus outbreak:

- UDH <https://health.utah.gov/>
- CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

In solidarity,

Emily W. Bleyl, LCSW, ACSW
Executive Director
NASW, Utah Chapter



National Association of Social Workers

UTAH CHAPTER