

A Checklist for Reopening Private Practice

The State of Connecticut is focusing on physical distancing, hygiene and personal protection for offices that are reopening. This checklist is based on recommendations from APA, CDC, and the State of Connecticut, and it is intended as a guide with suggestions on preparing your office to open.

When considering reopening Private Practice, please refer to APA recommendations,

https://www.apaservices.org/practice/news/in-person-services-covid-19?_ga=2.130412620.217608229.1590493081-342833437.1584640289

Psychologists should continue to use teletherapy wherever possible. Face to face sessions or assessment should be based on clinical necessity. Psychologists over age 65 or at risk due to health conditions, or family members at risk, are not required to provide face to face sessions and should put their own health first. Continue to monitor information from the APA, State of Connecticut, CDC, Insurance carriers and CMS through CPA updates and reviewing websites for each source.

Office Preparedness:

Consider your office setting as a starting point for planning, i.e., office building with multiple practices, group practice, home office, etc.

Develop a plan for reopening that includes the following:

- Minimize the number of individuals in the environment to reduce exposure,
- Allow for six feet of physical distancing wherever possible, or barriers/shielding between individuals if needed,
- Reduce and clean touch points,
- Have necessary personal protective equipment available for both the Psychologist and Client,
- Initial thorough cleaning, then regular cleaning based on the frequency of use and touch,
- Screening, education and signage for individuals who will be entering the building.

Minimizing the Number of Individuals in the Environment to Reduce Exposure:

Schedule face to face appointments based on clinical necessity, provide teletherapy whenever possible.

Coordinate planning with any other offices in the building, and other practitioners in a group practice, to stagger appointments and presence of individuals in the building. Offer appointments during times that are less busy (e.g. early hours, Fridays, weekends, etc). Avoid working on paperwork in the office in these settings to reduce the number of people in the building.

Eliminate waiting areas, or ensure that six feet of distance from others can be maintained while waiting by seat arrangement. Evaluate the need for physical barriers/shielding in waiting or reception areas. Ask individuals to wait outside, or in their car, prior to their appointment and call or text to invite them to enter the office.

Schedule appointments to allow extra time for individuals to leave after their appointment, before inviting those waiting for their appointment to enter. Also allow time for cleaning between appointments.

Conduct Intake appointments through telecommunication when possible. Obtain history and clinical information, as well as insurance or payment arrangements, prior to office appointment when possible.

Allow for Six Feet of Physical Distancing:

Arrange office seating to allow for six feet of physical distance, stagger position of seating so that seats are not directly in front of each other.

Open windows during sessions to provide ventilation. Ensure that ventilation systems are working and are cleaned.

Plan for physical distancing in entering and exiting buildings where possible. For example, if there are multiple entrances consider designating one for entrance and one for exit, or close off entrances that may interfere with physical distancing.

Use signage at elevators with guidelines for physical distance in the elevator and encourage use of stairs. Consider use of markers on the floor for placement of people waiting for the elevator.

Provide education to individuals prior to their entering the building, or office, on physical distancing. Offer reminders through signage. Education may include examples such as exiting the building before using a cell phone or having discussions.

Reduce and Clean Touch Points

Eliminate the need for paperwork in person and shared use of pens, clipboard etc., by completing forms and gathering information through electronic documents and Intake done through teletherapy or on the phone.

Eliminate magazines or reading material in the waiting area.

Use electronic payment options or wear gloves for any transactions. Sanitize credit card stations after use.

Open and shut the door for appointments to avoid multiple people using the doorknob

Install "no touch" waste receptacles or remove lids. Use disposable liners.

Consider keeping any interior doors in the building open, eliminate use of restroom keys.

Have Necessary Personal Protective Equipment Available for both the Psychologist and Client:

Require use of protective masks or cloth face coverings that cover nose and mouth for you and your client at all sessions. Provide education on this requirement prior to the session, and have a supply of masks available for those who forget or do not have a mask.

Have single use gloves available to reduce exposure to touch points.

Have at least 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer accessible for use for all who enter your office.

Have waste receptacles at the exit of the building for disposal of gloves.

Ensure restrooms have adequate soap and paper towels. Consider “no touch” dispensers.

Initial Thorough Cleaning, then Regular Cleaning based on the Frequency of Use and Touch:

Develop a plan for both an initial cleaning prior to reopening, then an ongoing cleaning routine.

State of Connecticut examples of areas for initial thorough cleaning prior to reopening:

Entrances/lobbies, bathrooms, kitchens, hallways, elevators, door handles/door knobs, shared equipment (e.g., printers, scanners, phones, and vending machines), desks, chairs, computers, monitors

Refer to CDC Guidelines on when to do routine cleaning vs. disinfection for high use, high touch areas:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening_America_Cleaning_Disinfection_Decision_Tool.pdf

Specific Information on cleaning from the CDC:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf

Disinfectants recommended by the EPA:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Screening, Education and Signage for Individuals who will be Entering the Building

Develop screening policy for clients prior to each session that includes calling before session and staying home if they have a fever, shortness of breath, cough, or have been exposed to someone with CoVid 19.

Educate clients on your CO-Vid 19 Policy and Procedures prior to session through pamphlet or letter, and on your website,

Post signage in building and office in appropriate languages with policy on staying home, physical distancing, and hygiene, including handwashing. Include pictures in signage if possible.

Post handwashing guidelines in rest rooms.

Refer to APA guidelines on Informed Consent prior to in person sessions:

https://www.apaservices.org/practice/news/in-person-services-covid-19?_ga=2.130412620.217608229.1590493081-342833437.1584640289