

FEATHERGILL AND ASSOCIATES POLICY FOR IN-PERSON SERVICES DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

All of us have been and continue to be profoundly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Throughout this time, the essential concern we have is for the safety of those we serve, those we love, and those in our communities. Soon after the pandemic hit, we shifted our practice from in-person to remote care. With the increase of client need, the availability of vaccinations, and the loosening of restrictions by federal, state and local governments we have conducted a thorough review of risks and benefits of returning to in-person care. We have concluded that teletherapy continues to be the preferred and safest method of service delivery, especially for unvaccinated and high-risk categories of clients and our therapists.* Thus, simply because we can return to in-person services does not mean that we should or must.

We have decided that returning to in-person care is a decision best made by clients and their therapists. At this point, we will only allow those who have been vaccinated to return to in-person care. Proof of vaccination is required. All therapists have been vaccinated. Our decision is based in part on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Indiana State Department of Health, the St. Joseph County Department of Health, and The American Psychological Association, but other factors and sources have also been considered. Some of these include but are not limited to: the health and safety of our clients and their family and friends, the health and welfare of the community, the vaccination status of family, the health of staff and their families, and the risk of exposure outside of this setting. If there is a resurgence of the pandemic, or if other health concerns arise, your therapist and/or Feathergill and Associates may require a return to telehealth for everyone's well-being.

It is up to each therapist to determine whether they will offer in-person services based on their own unique situation and discuss this with their clients. Clients who choose in-person care are assuming the risk of exposure to the coronavirus (or other public health risk). Such risk may increase with travel by public transportation, cab, or ridesharing service.

Each client and therapist agree to take certain precautions that will help keep everyone safer from exposure, sickness, and possible death. If these safeguards are not followed, it may result in starting or returning to a telehealth arrangement. We know these are difficult times for everyone and we all want this to be over but for now we need strict guidelines for everyone's benefit. Thank you for your adherence to the following policies and procedures:

1. Clients may keep in-person appointments only if they have been vaccinated and are free of symptoms associated with coronavirus.**
2. Clients will cancel their appointment if they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive within the last 14 days. (late cancellation fees will not be charged.)
3. Clients will not bring anyone with them to their appointment. (If the client is a child, however, the parent or guardian is welcome to enter and remain in the offices during the session.)
4. Clients will wait in their cars and not enter the office until 5 minutes before their appointment.
5. Clients will wear masks, use a hand sanitizer, adhere to the safe distancing precautions in the waiting room and therapy room.

6. Clients will allow their therapists to take their temperature with a no-touch thermometer. If a client's temperature is elevated upon arrival as determined by the therapist, the client will leave immediately and reschedule the appointment with the therapist remotely.
7. Clients will not engage in shaking hands or other physical touch with their therapists or other clients.
8. Clients will provide proof of vaccination and therapists will make copies that are kept in client's files.
9. Therapists will review the Consent for In-person Care and obtain client's signatures.
10. Clients and members of F&A will wear masks in any shared office space. Therapists and clients may discuss risks and choose to remove their masks in the therapist's office.

F&A Commitment to Minimize Exposure:

- CDC Guidelines, and other relevant health agencies guidelines and regulations for provision of in-person care will always be followed.
- If therapists or any other staff of Feathergill and Associates tests positive for Coronavirus, therapists will contact clients and discuss appropriate precautions, including return to remote therapy sessions.
- Maximum occupancy for the waiting room is 4 clients at any time.
- Magazines and books have been removed from the waiting room.
- The waiting room, and each therapy office has an Air Filter machine with a HEPA Filter to reduce possible virus transmission.
- Tissues and trash bins are easily accessed. Trash is disposed of on a frequent basis.
- Common areas are thoroughly disinfected at the end of each day, or more frequently.
- Therapists will obtain COVID-19 testing if they have been exposed to the virus.

Client Confidentiality in the Case of Infection

If a client informs us that they have tested positive for the coronavirus, Feathergill & Associates may be required to notify local health authorities if in-office visits have occurred. Only the minimum information necessary for data collection will be reported, and we will not go into any details about the reason(s) for office visits.

*Current research, for example, that immunocompromised people who are vaccinated may be significantly less protected from COVID-19 than people who do not have such immunological challenges. (see <https://ard.bmj.com/content/early/2021/03/23/annrheumids-2021-220289.long>).

**** Symptoms of Coronavirus:**

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat

- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea