Ethics Resources for the Use of Technology in Therapy

Almost all Marriage and Family Therapists utilize some form of technology in providing services.   We know that even landline phones are used with some risk.   With the availability of many more forms of communication and information sharing now, the benefits are greater, but so is the risk.   Online scheduling, texting, videoconferencing, email, social media (including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.), and other tools may be used in providing therapy, managing a practice, advertising, and other components of the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Many advantages are realized, including better access to services in remote areas, practices that are more responsive to the way many clients otherwise operate in their lives, and more opportunities to network and market.   The risks may include dangers to the client, such as if digital information is accessed by an unauthorized person.   The therapist is also at risk for liability related to the use of technology with or about clients.

The following list is a preliminary list of resources to promote understanding of the relevant legal and ethical issues.   This list is intended to supplement other professional training, supervision, and knowledge, in order to maintain ethical practice.

AAMFT resources

AAMFT Code of Ethics

http://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx

Typically when it comes to social media, the biggest concerns are client confidentiality, dual roles/multiple relationships, and general conflicts of interest.   Relevant portions of the Code include the ones found in these Subprinciples:
1.3 Multiple Relationships
2.2 Written Authorization to Release Client Information, and
3.4 Conflicts of Interest.

Additionally, the Code includes a section, Standard VI, specific to Technology-Assisted Professional Services.   Subprinciples 6.1 - 6.6.

AAMFT Ethical and Legal Columns: Distance Therapy

http://www.aamft.org/members/familytherapyresources/articles/09_FTM_03_44_45.pdf

AAMFT Legal Fact Sheets

Let Your Fingers do the Walking to the Courthouse: Long Distance Liability (2000)

http://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/legal_ethics/long_distance_liability.aspx

AAMFT Legal Fact Sheets

Practicing Therapy Via the Internet - The Legal View (2002)

http://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/legal_ethics/therapy_internet.aspx

AAMFT Ethical Fact Sheets

Therapeutic Contracts Help Clarify Dual Relationships in Rural Settings (1995)

http://www.aamft.org/iMIS15/AAMFT/Content/legal_ethics/dual_relationships_rural.aspx

<u>Articles</u>

Addressing Ambiguity in E-practice Management: Family Therapy and Supervision in a Digital Age

https://www.aamft.org/magazine/NovDec2012/

<u>Books</u>

Wilcoxon, S.A., Remley, T.P., Gladding, S.T., & Huber, C.H. (2012). Ethical, legal, and professional issues in the practice of marriage and family therapy (5th ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson, Merrill/Prentice Hall.

<u>Resources from Other Psychotherapy Associations</u>

NCBLPC Professional Brief

Confidentiality - Social Media and Professional Counseling

http://www.ncblpc.org/forms/12_Exam_Briefs/Confidentiality_Social_Media.pdf

NASW website

Social Workers and e-Therapy

http://www.naswdc.org/ldf/legal_issue/2007/200704.asp

http://www.naswnc.org/?320