

Rule 3.4 Standards for Use of Technology in Practice

A. Definitions

Client — means the individual, couple, family, group, organization, or community that seeks or receives social work services from an individual social worker or organization. Client status is not dependent on billing or payment of fees for such services.

Electronic social work services — mean the use of computers (including the Internet, social media, online chat, text, and email) and other electronic means (such as smartphones, landline telephones, and video technology) to

- (a) provide social work information to the public,
- (b) deliver social work services to clients,
- (c) communicate with clients,
- (d) manage confidential information and case records,
- (e) store and access information about clients, and
- (f) arrange payment for professional services.

In-person — refers to interactions in which the social worker and the client are in the same physical space and does not include interactions that may occur through the use of technology.

Remote — refers to the provision of a service that is received at a different site from where the social worker is physically located. Remote includes no consideration related to distance and may refer to a site that is near to or far from the social worker.

B. Electronic Practice Social Work Services: The practice of LSW, LMSW, or Clinical or Certified Social Work to an individual in this state or another state through telephonic, electronic social work services, or other means, regardless of the location of the practitioner, shall constitute the practice of social work and shall be subject to Rules and Regulations of the state where they are providing services and where the client is receiving services. Social workers providing electronic social work services shall take all necessary measures to ensure compliance with relevant practice standards and ethics.

C. Social workers who choose to provide electronic social work services shall:

1. Inform clients about risks associated with disclosure of confidential information on the Internet, social media sites, text-messaging sites, and videoconferencing sites, and the potential

consequences.

2. Use proper safeguards, including encryption, when sharing confidential information using digital or other electronic technology. Social workers shall protect clients' stored confidential information through the use of proper safeguards, including secure firewalls, encryption software, and password. Adhere to statutes and regulations regarding the secure use of digital and other electronic technology both within Mississippi and within the location where the client is located.
3. Inform clients that clients are advised not to disclose or post digital or other electronic communications from social workers or other recipients of services without proper consent.
4. Take steps to ensure that confidential digital communications are protected. Social workers shall use proper safeguards, including encryption, when using digital communications such as email communications, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, and text communications. Social workers shall develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying clients as soon as possible of any breach of confidential information.
5. Take reasonable steps to prevent client access to social workers' personal social networking sites to avoid boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships. Social workers shall maintain separate professional and personal social media and websites in order to establish clear boundaries and to avoid inappropriate dual relationships.