The TeleMental Health Examination (TMHE)
Content Outline

Definition

The TeleMental Health Examination (TMHE) measures a professional's ability to apply and evaluate knowledge in core telemental health (TMH) best practices. The TMHE is designed for National Certified Counselors (NCCs) or licensed mental and behavioral health professionals, including professionals under supervised practice. The qualifying criteria to take the TMHE are stated in the minimally qualified candidate profile.

Examination Purpose and Measurement Focus

The TMHE provides a standardized measure of the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) core competencies associated with providing TMH services. The examination's development is based on input from subject matter experts in TMH who determined the core domains of TMH services and developed the examination content of the TMHE.

The core domains associated with TMH services were determined to be:

A. Professional Orientation to Telemental Health (TMH)

B. Client–Practitioner Protocol

C. Disclosure and Informed Consent

D. Technology

E. Professional, Legal, and Ethical Considerations and Compliance Standards

F. Crisis Management

Target Population and the Minimally Qualified Candidate

The minimally qualified candidate (MQC) for the TMHE has a master's degree or higher in a mental health or behavioral health field. The MQC should hold a qualifying mental health or behavioral health professional license issued by a state regulatory board, and/or hold the NCC. A qualifying professional may be currently working as an associate/intern or under supervised practice if the professional complies with practice limitations. The MQC should be familiar with the following content areas, and in particular their application to TMH, through graduate-level coursework or continuing education: Professional Orientation to Telemental Health; Client–Practitioner Protocol; Disclosure and Informed Consent; Technology; Professional, Legal, and Ethical Considerations and Compliance Standards; and Crisis Management.

Examination Form

The TMHE is composed of 100 multiple-choice questions that pertain to best practices in TMH service. Of the 100 items, 80 are scored and 20 are unscored. Both scored and unscored items are of the same structure, and they appear in a randomized order throughout the examination. Examinees will have two hours to complete the TMHE.

Development of the Content Outline

The TMHE was developed by subject matter experts who possess vast experience in providing TMH services. Working collaboratively, they identified the aspects of mental health and behavioral health services that were most impacted when practitioners are geographically separate from clients or when services to clients are provided asynchronously. For each domain identified, the skills and knowledge areas corresponding to those domains were delineated. The resultant content outline was created and approved by the TMHE Subject Matter Expert (SME) Committee in August 2020.

The committee's responsibilities included, but were not limited to, defining the TMHE; defining the MQC for the TMHE; determining the examination format, length, and blueprint; and finalizing the content outline.

Table 1 presents the six domains and the number of items on the TMHE for each domain.

Table 1. *The Number of Items for Each Domain*

	Domain	Percentage of Items	Number of Items
1	Professional Orientation to Telemental Health (TMH)	10–20	8–16
2	Client–Practitioner Protocol	20–30	16–24
3	Disclosure and Informed Consent	10–20	8–16
4	Technology	5–15	4–12
5	Professional, Legal, and Ethical Considerations and Compliance Standards	20–30	16–24
6	Crisis Management	5–15	4–12

Note: The above item ranges reflect the distribution of the 80 scored items on the examination.

The following core domains and associated skills and knowledge areas were identified by subject matter experts with experience in providing TMH services. These domains are supported by the TMH literature and existing education in TMH services.

Table 2. *Skills and Knowledge Areas Related to the Domains*

1. Professional Orientation to Telemental Health (TMH)

Skills	Knowledge Areas
A. Distinguish between various technological modalities B. Use TMH as part of an integrative approach C. Implement the disclosure process D. Use ethical guidelines with social media E. Apply ethical practices to manage practitioner values and biases	F. Terminology relevant to TMH G. Differences between TMH and non-TMH practice The public health need for TMH H. The evolution of TMH I. The different settings for TMH practice J. The TMH disclosure process K. The ethical responsibility within the L. disclosure process The ethical responsibilities toward ongoing M. training, knowledge, and supervision

2. Client–Practitioner Protocol

Skills	Knowledge Areas
A. Implement screening for suitability to engage in TMH B. Use ethically sound practices when conducting appropriate screening and intake C. Perform ongoing client risk assessments D. Demonstrate ethical responsibility for understanding how the client self-identifies. E. Conduct client assessment (general) F. Apply mental health theory and interventions G. Conduct assessment of the client's personal resources and abilities H. Develop rapport with clients I. Sustain appropriate clinician relationships/ boundaries J. Obtain and maintain proper documentation K. Implement and execute setting of expectations sessions L. Evaluate ongoing effectiveness of TMH M. Demonstrate how to make appropriate referrals	N. Contraindications for TMH O. Ethics related to screening and intake P. Risk factors (e.g., domestic violence, suicidality, homicidality) Q. Mental health theories R. Appropriate and effective TMH interventions S. Client community resources in the geographic area in which client lives T. Ethics and guidelines regarding clinician relationships/boundaries U. Proper documentation V. Ethics regarding documentation W. Scope of process of TMH X. National and client-local resources Y. Ability to elicit information regarding client resources and abilities in relation to TMH Z. Ability to develop rapport including recognition of facial expressions and nonverbal communication AA. Ability to implement assessments AB. Ability to use summaries, reflections, affirmations, and questions effectively AC. Ability to facilitate client's cultural self-identification

3. Disclosure and Informed Consent

Skills	Knowledge Areas
A. Ensure the client understands the disclosures and is able to provide informed consent B. Address the aspects of informed consent that are specific to TMH C. Establish a protocol for social media D. Prepare a protocol for establishing local resources and an emergency contact E. Apply procedures for emergencies F. Prepare a protocol for verification of identity G. Establish client identity prior to session H. Prepare a protocol for verification of location I. Establish client location prior to session J. Prepare a protocol for verification of privacy K. Establish client privacy prior to session L. Prepare a protocol for verification of safety M. Establish client safety prior to session Prepare a protocol for management of technical N. difficulties O. Explain unique challenges and risks of TMH P. Address concerns of clients related to TMH Q. Monitor ongoing informed consent	R. Managing disclosures in TMH S. Informed consent process in TMH T. Ethically gathering informed consent U. Appropriate use of social media V. Elements of a safety plan W. What is required to establish client identity in a virtual environment X. Unique challenges and risks of TMH (e.g., technology failure, confidentiality, private connection) Y. Resources available to troubleshoot TMH issues

4. Technology

Skills	Knowledge Areas
A. Explain the benefits and risks of different TMH modalities B. Evaluate and select technologies for TMH C. Choose appropriate platform within chosen modality D. Implement chosen technology E. Demonstrate to the client how to set up chosen technology F. Instruct client of etiquette among different modalities G. Apply required technology security protocols H. Demonstrate appropriate storage of session recordings and documentation I. Demonstrate how to troubleshoot technical difficulties and poor quality of communication	J. Ethical responsibilities regarding technology K. Ethical responsibility of confidentiality L. Benefits and risks of different TMH modalities M. Different platforms and modalities N. Practitioner TMH etiquette within different modalities O. Security aspects of different technologies P. Terms related to technology Q. Rules and regulations related to recording sessions and documentation R. Ethical guidelines regarding the destruction of session recordings and documentation S. Hardware, software, and internet connection needs

5. Professional, Legal, and Ethical Considerations and Compliance Standards

Skills	Knowledge Areas
A. Apply privacy law requirements related to TMH B. Apply state and federal laws directing TMH practice C. Apply HIPAA compliance D. Apply the Privacy Rule E. Apply the limits of malpractice F. Demonstrate appropriate response to security breaches G. Demonstrate appropriate response to data loss H. Apply setting-specific security needs I. Conduct technology risk assessment	J. Privacy law requirements related to TMH K. Order of authority between state-level and federal regulations L. HIPAA M. HITECH N. Covered entities under HIPAA O. The definition of Protected Health Information (PHI) P. Who can and cannot access PHI Q. The role of a privacy officer R. The Patient's Bill of Rights S. Business associate agreements T. Risks of security breaches U. What constitutes a breach V. The HIPAA Security Rule W. The types of safeguards (technological, administrative, and physical) for risks and threats X. The consequences of non-compliance Y. The ethical responsibility regarding scope of practice

6. Crisis Management

Skills	*Knowledge Areas*
A. Create an emergency management plan B. Assemble a list of active client-local emergency services C. Conduct ongoing verification of status of client-local emergency services D. Establish protocol to clarify bounds and requirements of the practitioner when client is in crisis E. Employ de-escalation strategies in crisis F. Assess if client is in crisis G. Apply best practices in culturally appropriate crisis intervention H. Demonstrate ability to manage involuntary commitment	I. The signs of crisis J. The need for local supports (mobile teams, welfare/wellness checks) K. Systems and cultural context of local area L. The mental status of the client M The benefits/consequences of specific interventions N. The process of involuntary commitment

Sample Items

The following sample items are provided as a representation of the sorts of questions that can be asked from the different competency areas.

Domain 1: Professional Orientation to Telemental Health

Which of the following illustrates a motivation in the need for telemental health (TMH) services?

    A. rising demand for TMH services in shortage areas with limited access to mental health providers
    B. growing preference for the use of TMH by counselors for ease and convenience
    C. development of universal guidelines for TMH use for mental health professionals
    D. wider availability of Wi-Fi and higher speed internet connections to make use easier.

Domain 2: Client–Practitioner Protocol

Which of the following illustrates why it is important to document the client's residence?

    A. to ensure that your license is valid to provide TMH services in their state
    B. to ensure that there isn't a better counseling option for the client
    C. to ensure that the client is always at their residence on record
    D. to ensure your marketing analytics are congruent with campaigns

Domain 3: Disclosure and Informed Consent

Which of the following is the most likely location where a client will find the counselor's statement on expectations for telemental health counseling services?

    A. client assessment form
    B. informed consent form
    C. privacy policy document
    D. release of information form

Domain 4: Technology

You are upgrading your computers and plan to sell your old ones. Although you did store medical records on the old computers, you copied that data over to the new computers. Which of the following is the appropriate ethical action a telemental health provider should take before selling the older computers?

    A. change the password on the computers
    B. completely wipe the hard drives, including all partitions
    C. delete all the electronic medical records data
    D. remove the electronic medical records software

Domain 5: Professional, Legal, and Ethical Considerations and Compliance Standards

Which example could lead to a security breach?

    A. A videoconferencing platform is controlled by a third-party server that collects data from its users.
    B. A counselor scans the room remotely to ensure there is no one else in the teleconferencing room with the client.
    C. A counselor uses secure electronic messaging to communicate with a client between sessions.
    D. Electronic health records are accessible at the clinician site but not at the client site.

Domain 6: Crisis Management

Prior to the first counseling appointment, the counselor established the client's location and verified their identity. Which of the following illustrates the next step in crisis management in telemental health (TMH)?

    A. ensure that insurance will pay for TMH services
    B. compile a list of the client's local emergency services
    C. contact the emergency contact person
    D. start the first counseling appointment with the client

Question Number	Key
1	A
2	A
3	B
4	B
5	A
6	B