**POLICY:**

To ensure adherence to all applicable laws, rules, and regulations while ensuring patient access to mental health services through the use of “live two-way audio-visual communication”. These services provide long distance mental health services in the rural community setting to the consumers we serve. Treatment via telemedicine will not deviate from standards of care applicable to face-to-face assessment and treatment.

**PROCEDURES:**

The use of electronic communication and information technologies to provide or support mental health services at a distance. This definition includes: (1) live interactive two-way audio-video communication; and (2) any communication modalities such as phone, fax, e-mail, the internet, and still imaging that are used in conjunction with such live two-way audio-video communication. The same standards of care and protocol exist with telemedicine as are used when assessing and treating a consumer on-site. The staff-patient relationship is the same. The telemedicine mental health services Edwin Fair staff may be an adjunct to periodic face-to-face contact or it may be the only contact with the consumer by the staff.

Clinical oversight of the telemedicine mental health services will be provided by the Edwin Fair CMHC Clinical Director. The Edwin Fair CMHC staff should request face-to-face consultations if the consumers condition does not lend itself to a telemedicine consultation or if visual or sound quality is inadequate.

Telemedicine mental health services can be provided with consumer at a remote site such as hospitals, jails, homes etc. and Edwin Fair CMHC staff at an Edwin Fair CMHC facility. Edwin Fair CMHC staff can be at a remote site that is HIPAA secured and the consumer at an Edwin Fair CMHC facility.

Telemedicine mental health services will be provided by licensed and/or credentialed staff who are full/part time employees or have a current contract with Edwin Fair CMHC. The clinical care will be provided within the scope of their licenses or credentialing.

Other providers who may be present during the telemedicine mental health service include psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, case managers, support staff, hospital staff, police officers, etc. The presenter will provide incidental services, monitoring, and support services to the consumer for Edwin Fair CMHC staff delivering the telemedicine services.

**PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY**

The privacy and confidentiality of the telemedicine mental health service will be maintained by ensuring that the locations of the consumer and Edwin Fair CMHC staff are secure. The services will be provided in a controlled environment (closed doors) where there is a reasonable expectation of absence from intrusion by individuals not involved in the consumer’s direct care. Appropriate signs will be posted in office areas used in order to notify individuals not to enter the room during the time the service is being provided. Edwin Fair CMHC staff involved in the patient’s care, family members and technical staff may at times be present in interviews. Patients will be informed about others present in the room at the distant site if such persons are off camera and appropriate authorizations for disclosure of information will be obtained. Whenever possible, the presence of non-clinical staff during a mental health services will be avoided. If appropriate, an Edwin Fair CMHC staff member will be at the site with patient during the telemedicine mental health service to ensure the safety of the patient.

The telemedicine mental health service will not be audio- or video-taped without written informed consent from the patient.

**INFORMED CONSENT**

Informed consent for telemedicine mental health services will be obtained in writing from the patient prior to the service with the exception of consumers unable to consent to the service in a mental health crisis situation. The consumer will be made aware of the potential risks and consequences as well as the likely benefits of the telemedicine mental health services, and will be given the option of not participating with the exception of telemedicine crisis situations. Patients will be informed that services will not be withheld if the telemedicine mental health encounter is refused, although such care will depend on availability of alternative resources. The content of the consent will be discussed fully and a note documented in the record that this has occurred. The original signed consent will be filed in the consumer’s chart.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

All documentation of telemedicine mental health services will be documented in accordance with applicable standards, guidelines, by-laws, rules and regulations of the State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, CARF and any additional funding requirements.

A progress note will be written by the Edwin Fair CMHC staff to document each visit with the consumer. The progress note will be completed within 3 days of the visit.

Upon admission to Edwin Fair CMHC Medication Clinic a Psychiatric Evaluation will be conducted and documented in the patient’s record. Prescriptions for consumers are electronically submitted through an HIPAA certified approved software vendor. Such prescriptions will be documented in the consumer’s chart. Orders for lab work and review of lab work will be documented in a consumer’s progress note. When equipment failure prevents adequate diagnosis or treatment, a progress note should be written to document such failure.

**MEDICAL RECORDS**

All staff will ensure that current and accurate psychiatric, diagnostic, medical, clinical, and medication information is made available/accessible for routine care and in crisis situations. If the paper consumer record is kept at the site where the patient is being seen, arrangements will be made to have a copy of the record as well at the site of the treating clinician not only for routine care but in case of emergencies.

**TRAINING, LICENSURE AND LIABILITY**

All staff members involved in the operation of the system and provision of the services will demonstrate competency in using Edwin Fair CMHC’s telemedicine (including equipment operation and limitations and means of safeguarding confidentiality and security). Such training will be provided by the Information Technology (IT) department. All billable staff providing services to consumers will be credentialed through the Edwin Fair CMHC Compliance Coordinator to ensure licenses, certifications, and liability insurance are current.

**EQUIPMENT FOR VIDEOCONFERENCING**

Edwin Fair CMHC MIS Department will ensure that all telemedicine equipment used meets current standards.

**QUALITY OVERSIGHT/MONITORING**

Quality oversight of the service will be provided by the Edwin Fair Compliance Coordinator through annual reviews of documentation and monitoring of sites.

Patients participating in telemedicine mental health services will be asked to complete a satisfaction survey on an annual basis.

Sample questions that may be asked include, but are not limited to the following:

Was it easy to schedule an appointment?

Were your privacy and confidentiality protected during the telemedicine mental health service?

Were you able to communicate adequately with the provider of the service?

Were the picture and sound O.K.?

Was the provider on time for the appointment?

Were other Edwin Fair staff there to assist you if needed?

Overall, are you satisfied with the telemedicine mental health services?

**SPECIFIC OPERATING PROCEDURES**

Scheduling of appointments for telemedicine mental health services will be handled by the appointed staff of each site.

Prescriptions will be provided to the consumer via an electronic prescribing software that is HIPAA secure. Additional way that a consumer may receive medication is by a written prescription and given to the patient, phoned into the appropriate pharmacy, or transmitted to the pharmacy if applicable.

At the conclusion of the service the prescribing staff will complete a progress note and assign appropriate codes for patient payment functions.