



*Serenity* SOUTH PERTH  
PSYCHOLOGY

## 2022 COVID-19 POLICY

Version 1.1 | Created March 7, 2022

New policies and practices in preparation for  
'living with COVID'

[www.serenityonsouth.com.au](http://www.serenityonsouth.com.au)

## A *note* from our Principal Psychologist

Western Australia is now entering a new and unfamiliar stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, one in which we will be 'living with COVID' in our local community.

Due to the demand on our mental health services, it is essential that we can continue to provide uninterrupted mental health support to as many people in our community as possible while we navigate this challenging time together.

To ensure that we can do this, we have developed, implemented, or will be implementing new policies and practices in our effort to manage and minimise the risks of COVID 19 transmission at our psychology practice.

Our new policies are underpinned by local and national directives and guidelines, as well as Safe Work Australia guidelines. These incorporate recommendations from the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and the Australian Association of Psychologists Incorporated (AAPI).

However, these directives, guidelines and recommendations are likely to change, and we will update you if and when our policies change as a result.

We appreciate your understanding and support as we implement these new policies and practices in our efforts to keep you, our team, and our community as safe as we possibly can.

We look forward to providing you with our continued support.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Whyte*

Principal Psychologist



# OUR 2022 COVID 19 POLICIES & PRACTICES

## A SUMMARY

The following is a summary of our new Covid-19 Policy. It is important that you read the detailed descriptions of each policy to understand any changes that may affect you.

- Everyone working on our premises has been fully vaccinated and will not attend the practice if unwell unless a negative COVID test has been provided.
- To allow for therapy rooms and materials to be cleaned between sessions, face-to-face sessions will be shortened by 5 minutes.
- Telehealth therapy support will continue to be available for everyone.
- If a COVID directive prevents you or your therapist from attending the practice, your face-to-face appointment will not be cancelled but will automatically be converted to a Telehealth appointment (phone or video appointment). If the session is for your child and they are not able to have a Telehealth session, this session will become a parent support and review session (please note that Mental Health Care Plans and Medicare subsidies require the child to be in attendance).
- If a COVID directive prevents you or your therapist from attending the practice outside of 48 hours of your appointment time, you will not be charged if you decline our offer for your appointment to be converted to Telehealth. However, you may experience delays rebooking an appointment.
- If a COVID directive prevents you or your therapist from attending the practice within 48 hours of your appointment time, our cancellation policy will apply if you decline an offer for your appointment to be converted to Telehealth.
- Wherever possible, secure online client forms will replace pen and paper data collection.
- Stored credit card details will be required for any appointments booked from March 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 to allow for efficient, contactless and remote payment of fees.
- Additional control measures will be implemented at our practice to improve ventilation and ensure the building is clean and sanitised, and as safe as possible for everyone at all times.
- In the event of a possible or confirmed case attending our practice we will support public health officials with contact tracing and follow their advice.

# VACCINATION STATUS & COUNSELLING SUPPORT

## WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY

We are committed to providing assessment and therapy support to every member of our community during this challenging time.

### Face-to-face Assessment and Therapy Sessions

- Face-to-face assessment and therapy sessions will continue at Serenity Psychology South Perth until further notice.
- Face-to-face sessions will be shortened by 5 minutes to allow clinicians to clean therapy rooms and materials. (i.e. a standard 50-minute appointment would run for 45 minutes).
- Please see the additional policies we will be implementing at our practice to minimise the risk of contracting COVID-19 when you attend our clinic for face-to-face services.

### Telehealth Therapy Support

- Telehealth counselling support will continue to be available for children and adults. Please let your therapist or our receptionists know if you would like to move your session to Telehealth.

### COVID 19 Mask Exemptions

- For over 8-year-olds: If you have a COVID 19 mask exemption, please contact us as soon as possible to discuss how we can continue to support you.

# COVID 19 DIRECTIVES & YOUR APPOINTMENT

## CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE YOUR FACE-TO-FACE APPOINTMENT WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE CONVERTED TO TELEHEALTH

To ensure the continuity of your own care, and to ensure that we can continue to support as many people in our community as possible the following policies and practices will be implemented.

As we begin to live with Covid in our community it is likely that from time to time you or your therapist may be physically well but unable to attend a face-to-face appointment. Such as when:

- You or your therapist have mild cough or cold symptoms.
- You or your therapist have been identified as a close contact.
- You or your therapist are awaiting a COVID test result.
- You or your therapist have been directed to isolate or enter lockdown.

### Your appointment will automatically be converted to Telehealth

- If you are physically well but cannot attend a face-to-face appointment your appointment will not be cancelled but will be automatically converted to a Telehealth appointment (phone or video appointment).
  - › We will convert your appointment to a Telehealth appointment as soon as you let us know.
- If your therapist is physically well but cannot attend a face-to-face appointment your appointment will not be cancelled but will be automatically converted to a Telehealth appointment (phone or video appointment).
  - › If your therapist converts your appointment to a Telehealth appointment, we will contact you prior to let you know.

Telehealth appointments consist of video consults via Coviu and/or telephone if approved by your therapist. As we have an ever-increasing waitlist for our services it is essential that every available appointment can be used to support a member of our community.

# COVID 19 DIRECTIVES & OUR CANCELLATION POLICY

## **CANCELLING AN APPOINTMENT OR DECLINING TELEHEALTH WITH MORE THAN 48 HOURS NOTICE**

Our priority in 2022 will be to minimise the disruption to the support we provide to you and other members of the Serenity Psychology community. As we begin to live with COVID, it is essential that we can continue to use every appointment we have available to support as many people as possible.

Therefore, the following policies and practices will apply when face-to-face appointments are not possible because you or your therapist cannot attend due to COVID directives.

### **Cancelling or declining Telehealth with MORE than 48 hours notice**

*If **you** are physically well but due to COVID directives:*

- You need to cancel a face-to-face appointment and decline the offer of Telehealth at least 48 hours prior to the appointment time, you will not be charged for the appointment.

*If your **therapist** is physically well but due to COVID directives:*

- Your therapist needs to convert your face-to-face appointment to Telehealth at least 48 hours prior, and you decline the offer of Telehealth, you will not be charged for cancelling the appointment.

Please be aware that if you decline the offer of a Telehealth appointment you may experience significant delays in rebooking future appointments because your appointment time/s will need to be offered to a new client from our waitlist.

# COVID 19 DIRECTIVES & OUR CANCELLATION POLICY

## CANCELLING AN APPOINTMENT OR DECLINING TELEHEALTH WITHOUT 48 HOURS NOTICE

The following policies and practices will apply when face-to-face appointments are not possible because you or your therapist cannot attend due to COVID directives.

### **Cancelling or declining Telehealth with LESS than 48 hours notice**

*If **you** are physically well but due to COVID directives:*

- You need to cancel a face-to-face appointment at short notice, a late cancellation fee will apply (50% of the session fee if less than 48 hours notice and 100% of the session fee if less than 24 hours notice).
- You decline an offer for your appointment to be converted to Telehealth, a late cancellation fee will apply (50% of the session fee if less than 48 hours notice and 100% of the session fee if less than 24 hours notice).

*If your **therapist** is physically well but due to COVID directives:*

- Your therapist needs to convert your face-to-face appointment to Telehealth at short notice and you decline the offer of Telehealth, the late cancellation fee will apply (50% of the session fee if less than 48 hours notice and 100% of the session fee if less than 24 hours notice).

Please note: If your therapist has told you that Telehealth will not be suitable for your treatment, you will not be charged for declining the offer of a Telehealth appointment.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your therapist or our reception to discuss our cancellation policy further.



# TRANSITION TO ONLINE DATA COLLECTION AND STORAGE

## **PEN & PAPER DATA COLLECTION WILL BE MINIMISED**

We are currently in the process of moving our paper-based client forms to digital forms. As of March, the forms we use at Serenity Psychology will be digitally based and we ask that you complete forms via an electronic device prior to attending where possible.

We will be sending our new client details forms, the informed consent form, and any other paperwork for clients via email. These will come as attachments to your initial appointment confirmation email. Any additional paperwork that is required for existing clients will be sent via email. It is encouraged that these are completed electronically and emailed back to our reception team prior to your appointment.

This ensures we can provide efficient remote services as needed and will also help us to reduce any risks of COVID transmission associated with the use of pen and paper-based forms.





# TRANSITION TO ONLINE CREDIT CARD STORAGE AND PAYMENTS

## **STORED CREDIT CARD DETAILS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR ALL APPOINTMENTS BOOKED IN 2022**

In 2022, streamlined and contactless payment will be an essential part of our COVID policy.

In addition to reducing the risk of COVID transmission (by eliminating the use of our Payment Terminal/EFTPOS keypad and by reducing time spent in our waiting room when paying for face-to-face sessions), it will also allow for the automated payment of Telehealth appointments.

Many of our clients already benefit from this convenient payment method. However, the following payment policies and practices will begin to be implemented in the coming weeks and in full use from March 8<sup>th</sup> 2022, for all our clients:

- **Stored credit card details will be required for all clients with appointments booked in 2022.**
- Stored credit card details will either be collected from our Receptionists at your next visit or via telephone.
- For some clients, payment by direct deposit will be made available for the pre-payment of session fees. However, to ensure safety and efficiency this payment method will only be made available in exceptional circumstances.
- See the box below for information on how credit card details are securely stored on Halaxy, our practice management system.

### **Credit Card Processing**

Halaxy's payments gateway is powered by Braintree Paypal in Australia, who as one of the world's largest online payment providers have a stringent data and security policy when it comes to storing cardholder details. When your card details are entered into Halaxy, they are stored and tokenised by Halaxy's payments gateway, meaning that once initially entered and captured, they are not visible to anybody within the clinic or at Halaxy.

If card details need to be altered or updated, this requires the card to be completely re-entered, as a tokenised card is unable to be edited.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak directly with your therapist or contact our Receptionists.



# PROCESSING ONLINE CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS

## **CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS WILL BE PROCESSED AT THE APPOINTMENT START TIME**

Please find below detailed information about how your online credit card payments will be processed.

- Online credit card payments for sessions attended in person or via Telehealth will be processed by Reception at the scheduled start time of your appointment.
- Late cancellation fees will be processed when you notify us of the need for late cancellation or at the scheduled appointment time, whichever comes first.
- If a credit card payment is declined for some reason, you will be emailed the invoice and payment can be made using either the payment link or via direct deposit. Our bank details will be provided in the email.
- Late cancellation fees will not be charged when appointments are cancelled due to COVID illness, but please provide us with as much notice as possible. A medical certificate may be required.

If you have any questions about how we will be processing your payment, or if you believe we have charged your credit card incorrectly, please contact Reception as soon as possible.



# ATTENDING OUR PRACTICE AFTER THE BORDER OPENS

## HOW YOU CAN HELP US KEEP OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

As the WA border opens, we will implement changes to the way you attend our clinic for appointments as part of our efforts to further reduce the risk of Covid transmission at our practice.

The follow policies will come into effect on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022:

### Before your appointment

- Please contact us to change your appointment to Telehealth if:
  - › You are experiencing even mild cough, cold or stomach bug symptoms
  - › You or someone close to you has been identified as a close contact
  - › You or someone close to you is awaiting a COVID test result
  - › You have been directed to isolate or you are in lockdown.
- Please complete any online forms that we have emailed to you and send digital copies of any GP referrals or other paperwork we may need (photos are acceptable).
- Please try to remember to bring a pen and water bottle with you if needed. We will temporarily be removing communal water from our welcome room but please don't hesitate to ask our receptionist for either if you forget to bring your own.

And please don't worry - if you need help with any of the above prior to your appointment, please call us and we will work it out together.

### Attending our practice for your appointment

- To limit the number of bodies in the waiting room at one time, please wait outside if there is already another family being served by Reception.
- If suitable, please wait outside or in your car for your appointment and call us when you arrive. We will call you back when your session is ready to begin.
- Please check-in upon arrival using our Safe WA QR code or the physical contact register located near the front door of our practice.
- Please use sanitiser when entering the building. Sanitiser will be provided at the entrance for your convenience.
- When mandated, face masks must be always worn (age 8+). Please let us know prior if you have an exemption.
- Please follow physical distancing guidelines (1.5 metres).



# ATTENDING OUR PRACTICE AFTER THE BORDER OPENS

## HOW YOU CAN HELP US KEEP OUR COMMUNITY SAFE (CONTINUED)

### After your appointment

- Where possible please take used tissues with you.
- Please use sanitiser prior to using the door handle to enter the practice. Sanitiser will be provided for your convenience.

### Attending our practice with a family member or support person

- Whenever possible, only clients attending an appointment enter our building. We ask that where possible, family members or support persons bringing clients to our practice wait in their car.
- Of course, for many of our younger clients, this is not possible, so we ask that only **one family member** or **support person** enter the building. We understand that sometimes siblings may also be attending the practice and they are most welcome when this is necessary.
- We have minimal seating available in the reception area. Please ensure social distancing when using these areas.
- Family members must also **check-in** upon arrival using our Safe WA QR code or the physical contact register located at the front door of our practice or at the reception desk. Use hand sanitiser before entering the building. Sanitiser will be provided for their convenience.
- When mandated, family members or other support persons must also **wear a face mask** at all times inside the building. Please let us know prior if they have an exemption.



# OUR ADDITIONAL COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES

## **WHAT WE'RE DOING TO MINIMISE AND MANAGE RISK**

We are committed to doing everything we can to keep our team and our community as safe as possible as we all begin to live with COVID in our community.

Please find following the additional measures that have or will be implemented to help minimise and manage the risk of COVID transmission at our practice when the WA border opens.

### **Our people**

- In line with national directives, every member of our clinical team and our administrative team, have been fully vaccinated and have provided a digital copy of their vaccination certificate.
- In line with national directives, our cleaners and all trades people entering the building have been fully vaccinated and have, or will be requested prior to entering our premises, to provide us with a digital copy of their vaccination certificate.
- Everyone on our team has committed to work from home if they experience any cough or cold symptoms, however mild.
- When mandated (or preferred) everyone on our team will always wear face masks inside the building.

# OUR ADDITIONAL COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES

## WHAT WE'RE DOING TO MINIMISE AND MANAGE RISK (CONTINUED)

### Our premises

- As much as possible the front door will remain open to improve ventilation and reduce the use of the door handle.
- As much as possible windows in the building will be left open to improve ventilation.
- Air conditioners will be used throughout the building with windows open.
- Air purifiers are located in the reception area and all therapy rooms.

### Our cleaning practices

- Our COVID cleaning routine has been developed based on the current Safe Work Australia guidelines found [here](#).
- The premises will be cleaned and disinfected twice daily emphasising heavy-use surfaces such as the front door, waiting room chairs, reception desk and bathrooms.
- Sufficient breaks will be scheduled between every therapy session to allow for the rooms to be cleaned and disinfected between every client. For this reason, **client session times have been reduced to 45 minutes** to allow for adequate surface cleaning between client sessions.

# RESPONDING TO A POSSIBLE OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID 19

## WHAT WE'LL DO

Public health officials are responsible for responding if a person with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection enters a premise.

In line with the current WA government guidelines for responding to a possible or confirmed case of COVID 19, we will implement the following measures to assist public health officials to respond and minimise further risk to our community:

- If we become aware that a person attends, or has attended, our practice and displays COVID-like symptoms or shares information that causes us to have reasonable concerns about their health and the health of others who have attended our practice we will call 13 COVID and follow their advice.
- If we become aware that a confirmed case of COVID-19 attends, or has attended our practice, we will call 13 COVID and follow their advice.
- We will follow all public health advice about closing off affected areas and we will prevent access until our premises have been cleaned and disinfected.
- We will assist public health to identify close contacts by providing them with our contact register.
- Only essential personal contact details will be disclosed.
- We will complete a risk assessment with reference to the latest information available, review our COVID-19 risk management controls, and determine whether any changes or additional control measures are required.
- We will notify you as soon as possible if such an event affects you, or our ability to provide face-to-face services to you.



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## WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

These are unprecedented times, and the policies we are implementing to minimise and manage the risks of living with COVID in our community have been developed based on the best advice available to us at the time of writing.

Our policies will be reviewed regularly and updated if that advice changes.

If you would like to provide feedback on our policies and practices, please don't hesitate to email our Principal Psychologist, Lisa Whyte, at [lisa.whyte@serenityonsouth.com.au](mailto:lisa.whyte@serenityonsouth.com.au).