

Wyoming Telehealth Network

December Provider Spotlight:

Lacy Bangert



Lacy is a Licensed Professional Counselor who has her own private practice in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She has nine years of counseling experience, and believes in a collaborative, holistic, strengths-based approach to therapy. Lacy is skilled in utilizing different therapeutic modalities to help meet the needs of her clients, healing trauma, facing stress/anxiety, and walking through changes in life.

When did you first hear about telehealth? How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?

Bangert: Like many of us, before the pandemic lock-downs, I was skeptical about the value of telehealth in certain situations. I was grateful for the access it gave us for a quick chat with our doctors or for follow-up appointments. As it relates to mental health, I thought it would be difficult to establish a therapeutic alliance and might limit the value of the process for clients. Of course, these concerns were quickly dismissed when telehealth was our only option. I have come to celebrate the increased access to health care that telehealth provides to folks in rural areas or places where specialized providers are not available. And I continue to enjoy bearing witness to the success clients experience as a result of having access to mental health care.

When did you begin offering telehealth services? What prompted the need to offer these services?

Bangert: I began offering telehealth services in March of 2020. At that time, I was working in a high school and it was closed for the remainder of the year. I was able to provide counseling services in the areas of academic, personal, and career development. It was particularly important at that time for seniors to have access to these services ahead of graduation. Together we learned how to conduct counseling and all other related services via telehealth and it was life-altering.

What motivates you to continue offering telehealth services?

Bangert: Now my motivation to continue offering telehealth services is a passion for increasing access to

mental health care. Offering telehealth provides clients with flexibility and removes barriers related to travel and time. Not to mention that I really enjoy connecting with clients in this way and exploring ways to add value to the therapeutic process using technology.

What is your proudest accomplishment with telehealth?

Bangert: My proudest accomplishment with telehealth is not my own. Each time a client completes treatment and accomplishes their goals I am proud to have been a part of that process. I get excited when clients are brave enough to seek mental health services and the reason, they finally do so is that telehealth can connect them with a provider that is best suited for their needs.

What advice would you give patients wanting to try telehealth?

Bangert: Advice I would give folks who are wanting to try telehealth is to consider it a tool. Like any other technology we have to define when/how it fits into our lives. We can accomplish this by being open to it's various uses and with experience determining where it works and when we might prefer to be face-to-face with a provider.

What advice would you give providers wanting to start offering telehealth?

Bangert: Don't wait to implement telehealth in your practice. It is a wise decision for your clients and for your business.

What was the biggest barrier in providing telehealth services? Have you overcome it?

Bangert: The biggest barriers that I have experienced in providing telehealth services are legislation and internet access. Legislation that governs the use of telehealth varies greatly depending on location and profession. This can at times be complicated by the fact that clients do not know the nuances of these laws. It can be a time burden to learn and understand the laws that pertain to your practice and use of telehealth because they continue to change. I am cautiously optimistic as I observe how states and organizations establish rules regarding telehealth as COVID emergency legislation has ended nationwide. Telehealth can only be successful if folks have reliable internet access and this is continues to be a barrier to access. While I certainly don't have the power to influence these barriers, I do try to work with clients to educate and to provide resources when I can.

How do you think implementing telehealth now will affect how things will be done at your organization after the pandemic is over?

Bangert: Moving forward, it is my hope that telehealth will continue to be accepted and supported as a necessary component in health care. In my practice, I will continue to offer telehealth services as long as it is a benefit to my clients and is not cost-prohibitive (covered by insurance).

Is there anything you learned the hard way in telehealth implementation?

Bangert: One lesson for me was related to confidentiality. Clients who use their phones to meet via telehealth and have it connected to their cars can be a problem when a family member gets into the car during a telehealth session. The audio can automatically connect to the car, and you are suddenly now speaking with the family member. I have now included this information in my discussion with clients regarding confidentiality and it is no longer an issue.