

Conducting Remote Asylum Evaluations

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Society of Refugee
Healthcare Providers

Reasons to do a remote asylum evaluation

- COVID-19 pandemic
- Increasing number of people in detention centers
- Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP)
- Lack of trained asylum evaluators in the region



Evidence for remote asylum evaluations

- Bayne M, Sokoloff L, Rinehart R, Epie A, Hirt L, Katz C. Assessing the Efficacy and Experience of In-Person versus Telephonic Psychiatric Evaluations for Asylum Seekers in the U.S. In: Psychiatry Research, 2019. p. 282 113612.
- Green, A., Ruchman, S., Katz, C., Singer, E. Piloting forensic tele-mental health evaluations of asylum seekers. Psychiatry Research, Psychiatry Research 291 (2020) 113256
- Not much data for remote physical asylum evaluations



Preparing for the evaluation

- Communication with the attorney
- Setting up the space
- Use of interpreters



Communicating with the attorney before the evaluation

- Prepping the client for the evaluation
 - Evaluation may last 3-4 hours
 - Need to find well lit, private space
 - Charge devices
 - Adequate wifi or phone connectivity
 - Equipment client should have on hand (flashlight, ruler or coin)
- Priorities for the evaluation
 - Know what to focus on in case there is technology failure
- What platform will you be using?



Setting up the space (for the evaluator)

- Well lit room
- Charged devices
- Turn off anything that may make sounds (emails, reminders, messages, etc)
- Stable surface or stand if using phone
- Camera should focus on your face/ maintain eye contact with camera
- Do a test run to ensure audio/ video are working
- Think about how you will take notes



Use of interpreters for remote evaluations

- In person? With client? With evaluator?
- Phone-in?
- Video-conferenced in?



During the evaluation

- Review your role
- Obtain consent
- Trauma-informed care
- Discuss back-up plan for technological failures
- History
- Documenting scars
- Use of photography
- Psychological evaluations



Documenting scars

- Disclosing scars
 - Discussion with the attorney
 - From the client
 - Based on specific trauma incident
- How to navigate the camera for best visualization?
- Descriptive language becomes very important
- Photography
- GBV



Psychological evaluations

- Screening questionnaires- before or during the evaluation?
- Listening for clues of emotional states



Concluding the exam

- Is there anything else you would like to discuss today that we may not have talked about?
- How to get in touch with you if something comes up regarding their trauma history



After the evaluation

- Include how the evaluation was conducted (WhatsApp, etc)
- How were interpretation services included
- What documents were reviewed in writing documentation (i.e., photographs provided by the client, if applicable- use with caution)

