

TOPICAL WEBINAR FOR APA MEMBERS

An Educational Resource from Upheal

Clinical Documentation in the Age of AI

July 11, 2025

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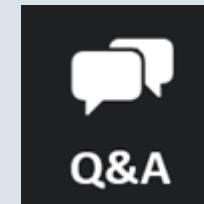
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Ted Faneuff

PRESENTER

- Ted Faneuff, LCSW
 - *Head of Clinical Operations, Upheal*

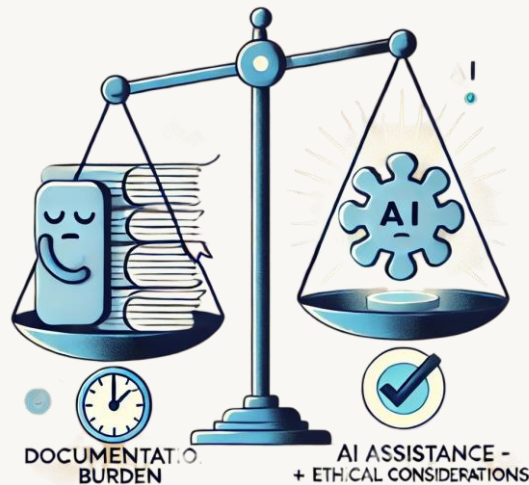
Today's Agenda

- **The Challenge & The Tool:** The "Why" and "What" of AI in Documentation
- **Core Ethical Pillars:** Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Professional Competence
- **Practical Application:** Best Practices for Compliant and Safe Use

The Documentation Dilemma: A Clinician's Story

- **The Problem:** Overwhelming documentation led to stress, procrastination, and feeling disconnected from clinical work.
- **The Turning Point:** AI-assisted tools offered a way to reduce administrative burden and increase presence with clients.
- **The Goal:** Using technology as a tool to support, not replace, the clinician's primary focus

The Problem & The Promise: An Ethical Balancing Act



- **The Problem:** The documentation burden creates ethical pressure and clinical burnout.
- **The Core Tension:** As confirmed in the research literature, AI's promise to "support efficiency" is balanced against significant "concerns around accuracy, consent, and privacy."
- **The Goal:** To find an ethical balance that supports psychologists without compromising care, grounded in APA principles.

Understanding AI: The Basics for Our Practice.

- **What it is:**
 - AI is pattern-recognition software; **Generative AI** creates content like note summaries.
- **What it isn't:**
 - AI is not a clinician. It lacks clinical judgment and cannot understand therapeutic nuance or context.
- **Its Proper Role:**
 - A **Digital Assistant** that you control to improve efficiency, not to make clinical decisions

The Ethical Landscape: Core APA Principles in the Age of AI



- **Competence & Due Diligence**
 - **(Standard 2):** A psychologist's ethical duty begins with vetting the AI vendor and understanding the technology *before* use, as outlined in APA's AI tool guide.
- **Confidentiality & Transparent Consent**
 - **(Standards 3 & 4):** Psychologists must investigate a tool's data security and then clearly explain its function and risks to obtain informed consent from the client.
- **Oversight & Final Authority (Principle A):**
 - Psychologists are fully responsible for the final clinical note. All AI output must be reviewed and edited to ensure accuracy and avoid harm

Data Privacy & Security: A Psychologist's Due diligence

- **Investigate Technical Security:** Per APA guidance, look for specifics like strong encryption (e.g., AES-256) and voluntary security certifications (e.g., SOC 2) to verify a vendor's security claims.
- **Scrutinize the Privacy Policy:** Carefully review how data is used, if de-identified data is shared or sold, and if you can opt-out of having your data used to train the AI model.
- **Verify Data Ownership & Retention:** Confirm that you retain control over client data and understand the company's policies on how long they keep records

Prioritizing the Therapeutic Alliance

- **The Core Principle (APA Principle A):** A psychologist's primary duty is to do good and avoid harm, which is achieved through a strong therapeutic alliance.
- **The Risk of Automation "Drift":** Over-reliance on AI can lead to reduced clinical presence; we must consciously use it as a tool to *increase* our focus on the client.
- **The True Goal of AI:** Use technology to handle administrative tasks, freeing up your cognitive and emotional resources to deepen the human connection with your clients.

Client Access & the Ethically Transparent Note

- **The New Standard:** Regulations like the 21st Century Cures Act now mandate client access to their clinical notes, making transparency a default practice.
- **Alignment with APA Ethics:** This transparency supports **Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity** by empowering client autonomy and involvement in their own care.
- **The Psychologist's Role:** With AI, a psychologist's oversight is critical to ensure notes are not only compliant but also therapeutically sound and respectful for client review, in line with the spirit of **Standard 6.01**

The Essentials & The "Golden Thread"

- **Core Components:** Every note must include key identifiers, session details, and clinical information to be defensible and meet compliance standards.
- **The "Golden Thread":** Ensure a clear, logical connection exists from the initial assessment, through the treatment plan, into every progress note.
- **AI as an Assistant:** AI can help structure these elements, but the psychologist must provide the core clinical content and ensure the thread is maintained

Documentation Boundaries: Do's and Don'ts

- **DON'T Over-document:** Avoid including overly detailed, non-essential information or subjective personal judgments. Notes should be clinically relevant summaries.
- **DO Justify Services:** Ensure your note contains enough detail to reflect active treatment and justify the length and level of the service you are billing for.
- **Remember the Rule:** In the eyes of an auditor or in a legal review, the old adage holds true: "If you didn't document it, it didn't happen."

Navigating Key Risks: Bias, Hallucination, & Over-documentation

- **Manage AI Bias:** Be aware that AI can reflect biases from its training data. A psychologist's review is the critical safeguard to ensure documentation is culturally sensitive and equitable.
- **Address AI 'Hallucinations':** AI can fabricate details or generate information not discussed in session. A psychologist must verify all statements against their own records to ensure the note is accurate.
- **Avoid AI-Prompted Over-documentation:** AI may generate excessive detail. Edit notes to align with **APA Standard 6.01**, ensuring they are clinically relevant and concise, not just exhaustive

Best Practices for Ethical AI Integration (APA Framework)

- **Due Diligence Before Use (APA AI Guide):** Vet the vendor's clinical expertise, data security (e.g., encryption, SOC 2), and privacy policies (e.g., data selling/sharing) *before* you adopt a tool. Document your review.
- **Responsible Implementation (APA Ethics Code):** Manually review and edit *every* AI-generated note for accuracy and nuance. The psychologist is always the final authority, in line with **Standard 9.09**. Obtain transparent informed consent from clients.
- **Ongoing Competence (Standard 2.03):** Your work isn't done after setup. Continually seek training and stay informed about the evolution of AI tools and their policies.

Key Takeaways & Next Steps

- **Clinician Control is Non-Negotiable:** Use AI as a tool to support, not replace, your clinical judgment and responsibility.
- **Ethical Communication is Foundational:** Prioritize transparent informed consent to maintain client trust and uphold the therapeutic alliance.
- **Advocate for Responsible AI:** As mental health professionals, continue to lead the conversation to ensure new technologies align with the core values of the profession.

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AUDIENCE Q&A

FINAL THOUGHTS

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- Take our survey immediately after the webinar has concluded.

THANK YOU!

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