Quick Guide to Telepractice Best Practices

Telepractice (noun): the delivery of remote health care services through a wide range of virtual models

TELEPRACTICE PLATFORMS

Health care providers use a range of telepractice platforms and applications (for example, Doxy.me, VSee, Zoom for Healthcare) to allow providers to communicate with individuals during telepractice. If you are selecting a platform, keep in mind ease of use for providers and individuals, privacy and security, compatibility with Electronic Health Records, and cost.

TELEPRESENCE ETIQUETTE

Telepractice has its own rules of etiquette. Using the right techniques to deliver care by telepractice will help put the individual at ease and make them feel more comfortable during the visit. Try these strategies for delivering telepractice visits that will be as professional, person-centered, and clinically useful as in-person.

- Maintain a person-centered focus and communication technique
- Make eye contact by looking right at the camera
- Use the live feedback video to evaluate your appearance and environment
- Dress professionally (as you would if you were seeing the individual in person)
- Ensure your background looks clean and professional
- Eliminate any visual or audio distractions
- Position the camera so your image is centered on the screen

CONSENT & PRIVACY

As a best practice, include language in your consent form to start a conversation about engaging in a telepractice visit. Be sure to check with your licensing board for specific requirements relative to your specific profession. Use an appropriate consent form approved by your compliance officer.

Check with your compliance team to confirm you are approved for telepractice services, codes and policies to ensure compliance.

Institute for Health Policy and Practice

NH CITIZENS HEALTH INITIATIVE

Franklin Pierce School of Law
Institute for Health Policy & Practice
Health Law & Policy

UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
Telehealth Practice Center

ENGAGEMENT

Several factors affect an individual's engagement in telepractice. Many of these factors are within our control. Keeping the process as simple as possible will help keep the individual engaged.

- Don't let the technology be a barrier or point of frustration for the patient.
- Empower the individual to take an active role in their care. Gain buy-in from the individual by sharing how telepractice enhances their care.
- Consider expanding your appointment availability to include non-traditional hours.
- Send out reminder phones calls and texts for upcoming visits.
- Be yourself and maintain the human aspect of the visit.
- Schedule visits at times that foster individual/family engagement (e.g. young children in the morning, later afternoon for school-age)

STEPS TO STAY ON TRACK

1 At the beginning of the call, set the visit expectations to provide focus and help the individual feel more comfortable. Clarify the length and purpose of the visit/important topics to address.

2 Elicit questions and input from the individual:

What is important for us to talk about today?

Circle back to any agenda items that were not addressed by the individual's question.

3 Stick to the allotted time. If the call starts to go long, revisit expectations set at the start of the call and make a person-centered statement.

I want to be respectful of your time and know we agreed on about 20 minutes for this visit. We are approaching the end of that time frame so let's plan to check in again and continue our conversation.

4 Schedule your next visit while you have the individual on the phone or technology.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Technology is a powerful tool that can improve care and access to services. With technology, comes the possibility of technical challenges to overcome. Most are preventable with good preparation.

- Completing a thorough practice run as both the individual and the provider before delivering a live visit will help you catch issues before they happen and anticipate "pain points" so you can better assist the individual.
- Make a back-up plan (or two!) – such as an alternate phone number for you to call.
- Make sure your computer, phone, or device is fully charged or plugged in, that the lighting is good and that the volume is on.
- If an unexpected challenge arises during the visit, don't panic. If you can't resolve the issue quickly, refer to your back-up plans.