

Checklist Telehealth

RAPID DEPLOYMENT during COVID-19

The recent responses by federal and state agencies to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) promote the uptake of telehealth. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Civil Rights (OCR) announced it will waive potential penalties for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) violations done in good-faith use of telehealth. Providers can use popular video chats such as Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts, Zoom or Skype. While this is positive news, barriers still remain to solving non-technological, practical elements of local care delivery that inhibit providers from implementing telehealth. These can be grouped into four domains: 1) coverage and reimbursement, 2) legal concerns, 3) clinical care and 4) social challenges.

The federal government's recent policy change took major steps toward resolving some legal concerns, including limitation of tort liability and allowing common teleconferencing platforms that may not be strictly HIPAA-compliant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative patients avoid travel, whenever possible, to health care facilities where they could risk their own or others' exposure to further illness. As the virus becomes more pervasive across the country, rural health systems and the under-resourced could benefit significantly from telehealth to manage the surge of COVID-19 cases.

The checklists below are designed to meet you where you are with offering telehealth services and to help address some of the barriers.

If you have already implemented telehealth, consider these options:

- 1.** As appropriate, use more frequently to keep well patients from coming to the clinic/hospital.
- 2.** As appropriate, use for patients showing COVID-19 symptoms and follow-up care.
- 3.** Get paid for your telehealth visit. Consult your billing contractor/department to ensure correct telehealth codes are used based on COVID-19.
- 4.** Remain vigilant for malicious, COVID-19-related cyber activity. Monitor Listservs and ensure physical and information security during telehealth visits.
- 5.** Sign up for the OCR Listserv: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html>.
- 6.** Need help? [Please contact Mountain-Pacific.](#)

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If you are looking for a temporary telehealth solution to start NOW:

- 1. Consider using video or voice technology most familiar to the patient.
- 2. Define a technology champion to assist patients who are not familiar with the telehealth platform.
- 3. As appropriate, use more frequently to keep well patients from coming to the clinic/hospital.
- 4. As appropriate, use for patients showing COVID-19 symptoms and follow-up care.
- 5. Get paid for your telehealth visits. Consult your billing contractor/department to ensure correct telehealth codes are used based on COVID-19 guidance.
- 6. Consult Mountain-Pacific's Telehealth Compare Worksheet for a comparison of security controls found in commonly used applications.
- 7. Remain vigilant for malicious, COVID-19-related cyber activity. Monitor Listservs and ensure physical and information security during telehealth visits. Sign up for the OCR Listserv: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html>
- 8. Need help? [Please contact Mountain-Pacific.](#)

If telehealth is new, but you are looking for a long-term solution:

- 1. Reach out to one of our partners to expedite your project.
- 2. Consider what is currently available from your electronic health record (EHR) vendor, state or regional telehealth networks or professional associations.
- 3. As a brief overview, the following factors can help make your selection easier. The needs of your medical practice and patients should guide your decision. Understand what you need and choose a system with only those features. Please consult Mountain-Pacific's detailed implementation guide for more information.
 - Specialty: Beware of platforms that claim to fit all types of practices, as they are unlikely to meet your practice's unique needs.
 - Goals: Consider your practice's goals. They will determine the type of platform you need, so carefully consider what you want out of telemedicine software before researching the market.

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- **Implementation and Training:** All telemedicine software requires an implementation period. How extensive depends on the complexity of the system. The implementation and training period play a big role in a practice's success with any health care information technology (HIT) software, so choose wisely!
- **Ease of Use:** Telemedicine software should be easy for your staff and providers to use. Hard to use and/or platforms not supported by your patient will disrupt your practice's workflows and make for a negative experience.
- **Integrations:** Ideally, your telemedicine platform will be able to integrate with your existing software, including EHR, scheduling and accounting.
- **Security:** Security is critical in health care, especially for patient data, and should be HIPAA-compliant. Ideally, no patient health information will be retained by the software or any connected devices.
- **Pricing and Fees:** Carefully consider pricing and any associated fees. Telemedicine is a relatively new and rapidly evolving space. Models range from simple and low-cost to comprehensive and expensive.

4. Need help? [Please contact Mountain-Pacific.](#)

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The information presented is current as of the date this checklist was published and is not intended as legal advice. Please consult the necessary professionals or regulatory agencies for more updated/detailed information.