

What Is Behavioral Telehealth?

Telehealth or telemedicine is the delivery of healthcare services using virtual technology. Providers can provide medical advice, a diagnosis, or a prescription by video or phone. It is a convenient way for patients to access health care services using a computer, tablet, or smart phone from the privacy and comfort of their own home. Additional benefits include:

- Reduced appointment and office wait times for patients
- Faster and more equitable access to care and prescriptions
- Decreased appointment cancellations by eliminating barriers such as need for childcare, missed work/school, and transportation
- Patient access to specialists who speak the same language or have similar cultural backgrounds
- Increased comfort for patients to talk about mental health and substance use related concerns, who may have felt uncomfortable in an office setting
- Increased scheduling capabilities to treat more patients

What Are Common Services?

- Psychiatric assessments
- Individual online counseling
- Online group therapy
- Treatment related to substance use disorder
- Telepsychiatry for prescription monitoring and refills

How Can You Engage Patients?

- Help patients better understand what telehealth is, the benefits of virtual health care, and how to schedule a telehealth appointment
- Provide extra guidance and support for patients to know how to access and troubleshoot your telehealth platform
 - Send reminders and instructions ahead of the telehealth appointment to ensure access
 - Explore the option of “rooming,” which has shown more successful telehealth encounters
 - Train support staff on the basics of your telehealth platform
- Discuss patient rights and responsibility, set expectations, and plan for emergency situations at each appointment
- Treat patients as if they are sitting across from you, avoid distractions and communicate with empathetic expressions just as you would if they were in your office
- Check your state’s current laws and reimbursement policies, and code claims correctly

Additional Support:

Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP) telehealth-related laws and regulations, [Telehealth.HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/telehealth)