



Implementing Telemedicine: A Step-by-Step Process

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Step 1: Identify the audience

- Who are the patients going to be?
 - All patients?
 - A subset based on age, internet access, medical condition?
- Where are the patients located?
 - Is high-speed internet readily available? How about cell service?

Step 2: Obtain your equipment

- Audio/video device
 - Webcam on desktop computer
 - Laptop with built-in webcam (e.g. Chromebook)
 - Tablet
 - Smartphone (does not require network if wifi available)
- Headset

Step 3: Choose a video platform

- Must be HIPAA-compliant
- Ideally, a platform that is browser-based for patient
 - This means the patient would not need to download an app
- Some platforms allow you to send visit link to patient by SMS
- Do you need the ability to include 3+ participants?
 - i.e. patient in addition to family members or interpreters

Step 4: Identify where/how team works

- Physical location
 - From home? How is the internet?
 - At the clinic? If needed, is there enough socially distant space?
- Staff communication if providers and staff physically separate
 - HIPAA-secure chatting platform?
 - Directory of key clinic phone numbers?

Step 5: Designate telehealth appointments

- Create a unique visit type in your Electronic Health Record
 - Make all telehealth visits the same length to start.
 - Once providers and patients are comfortable, consider a short and long telehealth appointment offering.
 - Use this unique visit type to track metrics compared to in-person visits

Step 6: Communicate with patients

- How will you notify patients of their appointment link?
 - Patient portal? SMS? Email?
 - SMS easiest if using cell phone for visit (built-in mic and camera)
 - Email easiest for tablet users
 - Do not use a staff member's personal email address to send emails
- How can patients quick contact clinic if having difficulty connecting?
 - Offer a direct phone # that bypasses the operator if need be.

Step 7: Plan for paper

- Prescriptions:
 - If e-prescribing is not an option, will you call in or fax prescriptions?
 - How about controlled substance prescriptions?
- Patient Instructions & Letters:
 - Do you have a system to print & mail printouts?
 - What if a provider is working off-site?

Step 8: Assume there will be glitches

- Do you have a technical support plan for staff? For patients?
 - If no central tech support, delegate a few individuals to receive extra training on the telehealth platform to support patients
- Plan to quickly switch from video visit to phone visit if needed

Resources

- The Telehealth Toolkit (thetelehealthtoolkit.com)
- IHS Telehealth Resources (ihs.gov/telehealth/resources)
- Navajo Nation experience (echo.unm.edu/doc/covid/Chinle-Slide.pdf)



Questions?