

TELEMEDICINE: GETTING STARTED



If you're ready to implement telemedicine, TMA has developed some quick tips to help you get started.

TECHNOLOGY

- 1. Choose your technology.** Some telemedicine platforms are stand-alone while others have integrations with various electronic health record (EHR) vendors. A few things to consider:
 - a. TMA has a telemedicine [vendor evaluation tool](#) that provides a list of questions you should ask a vendor you are considering.
 - b. Be sure to choose a secure, encrypted technology that is HIPAA-compliant, and execute a business associate agreement (BAA) with the vendor. A sample BAA for members is in TMA's HIPAA resource center: www.texmed.org/HIPAA.
 - c. TMA members are eligible for a [free technology contract review](#) by the Coker Group.
- 2. Set up your technology and equipment.** If you will use your desktop to conduct your telemedicine visits, be sure you have a camera, microphone, and speakers. If you will use a smartphone, download the appropriate application.
- 3. Test the technology.** Be sure the camera and speakers work. Make sure you can log into the technology. It's a good idea to conduct test visits with practice staff or family members.

COMPLIANCE

- 1. Standard of care.** When providing telemedicine, the standard of care that applies is the same that would apply if you provided the same health care service in an in-person setting.

- 2. Medical liability insurance.** Inform your medical liability insurance carrier that you intend to begin conducting virtual visits. Policies with Texas Medical Liability Trust, TMA's exclusively endorsed liability carrier, cover telemedicine visits. Before coverage is active, TMLT typically asks policyholders to complete a questionnaire specific to telemedicine.
- 3. Patient location.** Physicians licensed in Texas may conduct virtual visits only with patients physically located in Texas. Please refer to TMA's white paper: [Texas Laws and Regulations Relating to Telemedicine](#).
- 4. Documentation.** Physicians providing telemedicine medical services are under the same obligation to keep and maintain an adequate medical record as they are if the services are provided in person.

BILLING AND PAYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Telemedicine payment policies vary by payer, and there is a possibility a payer will not pay for a telemedicine visit. Check payer-specific policies for more information.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND WORKFLOW

As you think through the workflow of each visit, take a few minutes to review the various telemedicine policies, procedures, and forms available on the TMA telemedicine page (www.texmed.org/Telemedicine/), such as:

- Telemedicine visit checklist,

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- Telemedicine appointment scheduling,
- Obtaining and documenting patient consent (patients can view form on practice site and provide verbal consent – be sure to document),
- Physician surroundings during a telemedicine visit, and
- Prescribing and medication management.

Be sure to check with your chosen vendor as telemedicine platforms have various capabilities for obtaining consent and gathering previsit information. The sample policies and procedures should be customized to the practice.

INFORMING YOUR PATIENTS

Once you have telemedicine capabilities in place, determine which patient populations you could offer this service to and for which illnesses. You can then alert your patients in numerous ways:

1. When a patient calls for an appointment, if appropriate, the office staff can offer a telemedicine visit option.
2. Post notices and/or flyers throughout the practice alerting patients of this new visit option.
3. Post an announcement on your website.

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