

# Telehealth and COVID-19

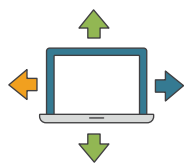
## How to Choose a Telehealth Solution



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In response to the COVID-19 crisis, many health care providers are turning to telehealth for the first time to connect with patients while minimizing virus exposure. This fact sheet outlines key considerations that organizations should understand before choosing a telehealth solution, as well as questions to ask telehealth providers.

### COVID-19-Specific Key Considerations



**Find an immediate telehealth solution that you can also use after the COVID-19**

**pandemic:** How long will it take to implement the solution before it can be used? Will it address today's business needs? How will it be used once the pandemic is over?



**Free or subsidized telehealth solution:**

What government, association, health plan, or foundation opportunities are available to help financially support hardware, software, or technical assistance costs? (See the Coalition's [website](#) for more information.)



**Reimbursement during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

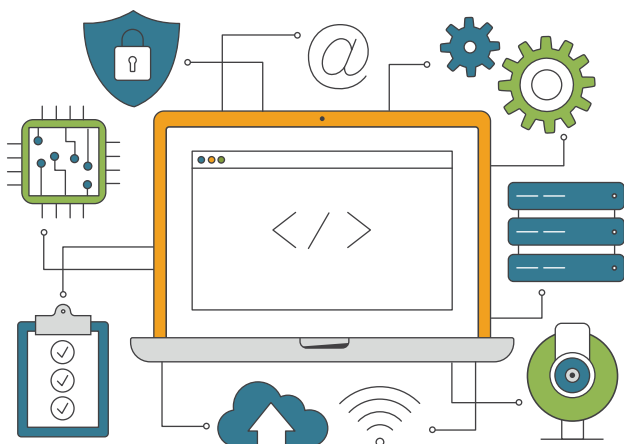
Are your payers reimbursing for virtual visits during COVID-19? Is there an end date to this reimbursement? Can your telehealth vendor produce the reports you will need for future reimbursement? (See the Center for Connected Health Policy's [website](#) for more information.)

### Questions for Telehealth Solution Provider

- ✓ **Platform features:** Does the telehealth solution offer live video, patient chat, image sharing, and/or messaging with other providers?
- ✓ **Privacy and security:** Is the telehealth platform HIPAA compliant? Will the vendor sign a business associate agreement, and are the visit data securely stored, archived, encrypted, and anonymized? Are

patients identifiable, or are visits anonymized? (See Health and Human Services [website](#) for more information.)

- ✓ **Consent:** Do the telehealth solution providers obtain consent from the patient at the beginning of each visit and capture it in the patient's medical record?
- ✓ **Hardware requirements:** What equipment requirements must be met for the platform to function optimally? What, if any, peripherals/devices are supported for improved data flow between patients and providers — for example, glucometers, thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, etc.?
- ✓ **Internet connectivity:** What bandwidth requirements must be met for optimal connectivity? Is the telehealth solution cloud-based only? What connectivity recommendations are made by the vendor that must be taken into account?



- ✓ **Cost of the telehealth solution:** What costs are incurred in addition to initial licensing, setup, and support? Are there annual or recurring fees?
- ✓ **Visit initiation:** Who has the ability to initiate virtual visits? Both providers and patients? Are patients allowed to wait on hold in a virtual “waiting room”?
- ✓ **EHR integration:** Does your current EHR support virtual visits? Or are you selecting a virtual platform compatible with your EHR — for example, single signon, eligibility checking, scheduling, note taking, and/or streamlined clinical coding and billing?
- ✓ **Support:** Is there a reasonable service level offered? Are additional administrative or information technology staff required to support the solution, or is it easily managed once installed and in use?
- ✓ **Provider network:** Does the telehealth solution offer access to a provider network to supplement existing specialty access? Do the providers meet necessary credentialing and licensing requirements?
- ✓ **Patient access:** Can the patient access the telehealth solution using a smartphone app and/or a computer? How easy is it for a patient to download the software? Is there an option to use a telephone to call in to a visit?
- ✓ **Patient marketing tools and support:** Does the telehealth solution provide patient communications and other tools to build awareness and comfort with accessing virtual care?
- ✓ **Reporting:** Can regular reports be generated and customized? Are key outcome metrics tracked, such as number of visits/encounters, types of visits (video, phone, and messaging), demographics of patients served, response times, payer coverage, and patient and provider satisfaction?

#### The California Telehealth Policy Coalition

The coalition is the collaborative effort of over 60 statewide organizations and individuals who work collaboratively to advance California telehealth policy. The group was established in 2011 when AB 415 (The Telehealth Advancement Act) was introduced and continues as telehealth becomes integral in the delivery of health services in California. Convened by the Center for Connected Health Policy, the coalition aims to create a better landscape for health care access, care coordination, and reimbursement through and for telehealth.

Visit the coalition online at [www.cchpca.org/about/projects/california-telehealth-policy-coalition](http://www.cchpca.org/about/projects/california-telehealth-policy-coalition).