

MAKING THE TRANSITION TO TELETHERAPY



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR INTEGRATED CARE

UNDERSTAND THE NUTS & BOLTS

Informed consent: Informed consent, as related to teletherapy, should still be obtained in written or verbal format, even if an electronic signature.

- The following statement is an example of addressing telehealth in the consent process: A statement such as, *“There are risks and consequences from telehealth, including, but not limited to, the possibility, despite reasonable efforts on the part of the therapist, that: the transmission of protected health information could be disrupted or distorted by technical failures; the transmission of protected health information could be interrupted by unauthorized persons; and/or the electronic storage of protected health information could be accessed by unauthorized persons.”*

Confirm identity: Therapists should confirm the patient’s identity. This can be done verbally or in writing, some teletherapy platforms require the patient to type their name in the portal prior to entering session.

Confidentiality: The laws that protect the confidentiality of protected health information also apply to telehealth services. Unique risks to confidentiality should be explicitly addressed in the informed consent. Additionally, therapists should ask about the patient’s space, if other people are in the room with them, and if the people can hear the patient and/or the therapist. If so, the therapist should ask the patient if they are comfortable.

Emergency procedures: Review emergency procedures during the first session when reviewing policies and procedures. At the beginning of each session, verify the patient’s location in case of emergency.

Policies and procedures (P&Ps): Therapists should review P&Ps with patients at the initiation of telehealth services, and again as needed. Therapists should highlight special considerations for telehealth services, such as information security when using telecommunication technologies.

CRASH COURSE IN TECHNOLOGY

Internet connection: Use wired ethernet instead of Wi-Fi whenever possible, ethernet provides a more stable connection.

Testing: Prior to appointments, ensure your internet is connected. It is also recommended to test your speed, as telehealth providers should have at least 10mbps. Check the portal from the patient’s log in as well, to see what the patient might experience. Adjust your audio, video, and lighting.

- [You can perform an internet speed test here.](#)
- Computer Focus: Close all other programs and windows before entering a teletherapy session.
- Plan B: Develop a plan for when/if the internet fails. For example, you may agree to contact the patient by phone if there are technology related challenges.






CREATING A THERAPEUTIC CONNECTION IN A VIRTUAL SPACE

Advise preparation time: Patients often enjoy the time before an appointment, whether it be in the waiting room or during the commute, as it allows them to collect their thoughts and enter therapy with an agenda. Suggest that the patient take a little time to jot down notes prior to entering the session.

Share screen: Many Telehealth platforms have a share screen option. Utilize psycho-educational videos, worksheets, and activities that may increase engagement.

Check-in: Regularly checking in with the patient on their experience in teletherapy is encouraged. Not only is this modeling healthy communication, it is opening the door for the patient to direct the therapist toward their needs in session.

CONTACT US

-  2401 Weston Parkway, Suite 203, Cary NC 27513
-  919-821-0485 ext. 108
-  www.coeintegratedcare.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center: Telebehavioral Health Center of Excellence](#)

[Anxiety and Depression Association of America Innovative Technology: Telehealth, Tablets, and Other Technology Podcast](#)

[Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#)

[Therapist Aid: Interactive Tools, Worksheets, Guides, & Videos](#)