

# Professional Practices for using Telehealth

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# Objectives

1. Define telehealth
2. Identify when it is appropriate to use telehealth
3. Apply ethical guidelines for the practice of telehealth
4. Understand professional presence on telehealth
5. Learn about available telehealth therapy resources

# What is telehealth?

"Telehealth" is the delivery of health care services using information and communication technologies to **consult, diagnose, treat, or educate a patient** while the patient is at an "originating site" and the health care provider is at a "distant site." *Cal Bus and Prof Code §2290.5 (4)*



# Synchronous vs Asynchronous

- **Synchronous** telehealth involves live interactive communication using a telephone or videoconferencing platform (e.g. Zoom, Doxi, Skype etc.).
- **Asynchronous** is not real-time and can include modes such as email, text messaging, or other app messaging services.

**Discussion question:**

What is allowed at CGC?

# Is telehealth approved by the mental health disciplines?

- Yes; Social Work, Psychology, Marriage & Family Therapy, & Professional Counseling approve of the use of telehealth.
- Check out your discipline's guiding principles at the following links:
  - [National Association of Social Workers](#)
  - [California Association of Marriage & Family Therapy](#)
  - [American Psychological Association](#)
  - [American Counseling Association](#)
  - [Board of Behavioral Sciences](#)
  - [CA Board of Psychology](#)

# Tips for Getting Started

# Intake and Initial Consent

1. **Pending intakes:** may receive intake paperwork mailed by USPS; pick up the packet at the clinic and complete at home or car; or receive via email if they have access to print.
2. **New intakes:** will have the same options listed above.
3. **Packets will include:** Consent forms & Intake Advisement Checklist. Forms can be dated and signed prior to the scheduled intake.
4. **Procedure:**
  - a. Families will provide the intake coordinator their availability for the initial intake session and be informed that the intake session will take place following receipt of the intake packet.
  - b. Clinicians will be informed of the family's availability and returned packet for scheduling initial contact.
  - c. Subsequent sessions will be conducted by telephone, tele-health, or in-person if feasible.



# Professional Presence

- A telehealth space is a **virtual office**, but it's an office.
- Plan to be professionally present and courteous in the same ways you would be in your physical office.
  - **Attire:** dress professionally, avoid casual home attire
  - **Activities:** avoid multi-tasking, texting, emailing, eating, driving, pets, talking on your phone, radio, television or attending to other screens, and going to restroom.
  - **Settings:** mute and pause video as needed

**Discussion question:**

What are some ways to show that you're present?

# Assess if videoconferencing is appropriate for the patient/client

- Consider the patient's clinical & cognitive status – can the patient effectively participate?
- Does the patient have the technology resources for a videoconference – e.g. webcam or smartphone?
- Consider the patient's comfort in using technology – can they log in and effectively use the technology?
- Does the patient have physical space for a private telehealth session?
- Is parent/guardian permission required? If so, obtain it.
- Consider the patient's safety (e.g., suicidality) and health concerns (e.g. viral risk; mobility; immune function), community risk, and provider health when deciding to do telesessions instead of in-person sessions.

# Technology

- Is your technology platform consistent with HIPAA-compliant practices? Yes!
- Do you have a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) for that technology vendor? Yes!
- Do you and the patient have adequate internet connectivity for videoconferencing?
- Did you discuss with the patient how to log in and use the technology?
- Are you using a password-protected, secure internet connection, not public or unsecured WiFi? What about your patient?
- Did you check that your antivirus/antimalware protection is up-to-date to prevent being hacked? What about your patient?

# Set-up

- Is the location private? Is it reasonably quiet?
- Make sure the room is well lit. Example: A window in front of you might cast a shadow or create low visibility.
- To improve eye contact, position your camera so that it's easy to look at the camera and the patient on screen.
- Consider removing personal items or distractions in the background.
- Check the picture and audio quality. Can you see and hear each other? Make sure nobody is muted.
- As much as possible, both people should maintain good eye contact and speak clearly.

# Pre-session

- Discuss the potential risks/benefits of telehealth sessions with the patient(s).
- Get a signed informed consent from your patient(s) or patient's legal representative. If the provider or patient is quarantined, informed consent must be signed electronically; consider DocHub or DocuSign.
- Do you have a back-up plan in case of technical difficulties? A telephone number? In case of a crisis situation? What contact information do you have? Do you know the local resources (e.g. emergency room) where the patient is?
- In the case of minors, determine where the adult will be at that location. Is minor home alone?

# Beginning of Virtual Session

- Verify the patient's identity, if needed.
- Confirm patient's location and a phone number where the patient can be reached.
- Review the importance of privacy at your location and patient's location.
- All individuals present for the virtual visit must be within view of the camera, so the provider is aware of who is participating.
- Confirm that nobody will record the session without permission.
- Turn off all apps and notifications on your computer or smartphone. Ask patient to do the same.
- Conduct the session mostly like you would an in-person session. Be yourself.

# Resources

- [Zoom Video Tutorials](#)
- [Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [Webinar Internet PCIT Playful Therapist](#)
- [Telehealth for Children](#)
- [Tele-Play](#)
- [Tele-Play Tips](#)

# Open Discussion Q & A



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