



PARTNERS
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Provider Tip Sheet #1

Technology Based Services during COVID-19

For behavioral health providers continuity of care for vulnerable populations is of paramount importance. The stress of social distancing, significant and rapid change in daily routines, anxiety about safety, and a reduction in access to typical coping mechanisms likely will exacerbate mental health issues. Therefore, access to services remains a priority. For those providers and members who are not familiar and accustomed to telehealth, teletherapy, or other online based services, the learning curve can feel steep.

The following key points provide some basic principles for organizations and providers to consider.

- 1) Some members may adjust well to online services and may be less inhibited. For others, it may increase anxiety.
- 2) The times that members may need services may shift. For instance, with children being home based, adults working from home, etc.
- 3) Build into appointment times 5 minutes for set-up and testing of technology.
- 4) Incorporate trouble shooting time.
- 5) Consider how documentation will be completed and secured for clinical and billing purposes.
- 6) At the start of the appointment check in and ensure with the member that they are safe, and in a private place.
- 7) Ensure that members are not driving and that the practitioners are not driving.
- 8) Consider background noise and who may be seen in the viewing screen.
- 9) Earphones are recommended for privacy and ease of hearing.
- 10) It may be beneficial to use a withheld number or disguised number if telephone services are provided. Examples include Psychology Today's number system.
- 11) Check and verify the identity of the person that you are speaking with
- 12) It is best practice to risk assess the member each session.
- 13) For telephone sessions consider what non-verbal and verbal signals can be listened for and utilized that are not sight reliant. Examples: pace, tone, choice of words, pauses, and silence.
- 14) Informed consent for tele-health: Gain verbal consent for tele-health and document in the record. To record a member requires a separate explicit consent.
- 15) Appropriate client groups: Consider what clients are most amenable to online work. Consider age, attention span, security at the originating location, access to broadband and devices, any visual and auditory barriers and the member's current knowledge of technology.
- 16) Consider means to gain real time feedback on how telehealth is being tolerated by the member.