

How Telehealth Can Benefit You and Your Client

As technology advances, the number of words beginning with “tele” keeps increasing. Words like telephone, television, and telescope, just to name a few, have been part of our everyday vocabulary for ages. Now it’s time to learn another word that is equally important--**Telehealth**.

What is Telehealth?

According to the Health Services Resources Administration, telehealth is “the use of electronic information and telecommunications technology to support long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, and health administration.”

<https://www.healthit.gov/faq/what-telehealth-how-telehealth-different-telemedicine>

Similarly, but in simpler terms, the Mayo Clinic defines telehealth as “the use of digital information and communication technologies, such as computers and mobile devices, to access health care services remotely and manage your health care.”

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/telehealth/art-20044878>

Telehealth goes beyond telemedicine, encompassing a much broader range of services.

Whereas, telehealth is not limited to clinical services, telehealth also includes provider training, administrative meetings, and continuing medical education. This fast-emerging online way to communicate “face to face” with a client via video chat for one-on-one coaching, classes, educational programs, and accountability sessions with become the norm for everyday use. A coach is just a click away from interacting with a client.

Telehealth can utilize any of the following technologies:

- videoconferencing
- the internet
- store-and-forward imaging
- streaming media
- wireless communication

5 Important Ways That Telehealth Provides Benefit

1. Convenience

No longer does a person need to take time out of their busy schedule to travel to their Coach's, office and then wait to be seen every time they have an appointment. Now appointments can take place at the convenience of both the client and coach in the privacy of their own home or office.

2. Group Coaching

The Coach can keep costs down for the client and earn a higher hourly rate by doing group counseling through a secure telehealth portal that accommodates a more than one client at a time.

3. Online client portal

Coach's and Clients have access to their own portal where a coach can access the client's account. The coach can better guide a client on the use of wellness platforms via screenshare through a secure HIPAA compliant portal.

4. Easy Connect with Clients

Telehealth makes it a lot easier to connect with a coach on an "as needed basis" or for health challenges and programs over a course of a few weeks or months. It also eliminates a lot of unnecessary visits driving back and forth. More importantly a coach can remote track the client's activity and have a video chat on how the client is adhering to recommended programs and services

5. Private and Secure Platform that is HIPPA Compliant

Telehealth platforms respect patients' right to privacy and are fully compliant with HIPPA guidelines.

Conducting a Telehealth Consultation

It is critical to conduct a counseling session with a client through a secure and HIPAA compliant platform, as personal health information must always be protected during the session. Platforms such as Skype, Join.me, Zoom, Facetime and other popular platforms may not be HIPAA compliant and do not offer the protection to the client and coach. Not using a HIPAA

compliant platform to communicate with the patient can leave the Coach open to huge fines and penalties. A HIPAA compliant telehealth portal comes free of charge with the Nutrition Factor's Coaching Portal. The telehealth features Nutrition Factors offers comes with video chat services, file transfers, 3-way calling option, take photos, message, screen share, and instant billing at the time of service. Clients do not need to download any software to connect to their coach. Instead they only need the coach's "Waiting Room" URL to join an online session with a coach. The telehealth portal provided is simple, easy and is a secure HIPAA compliant platform to use.

State Laws and Regulations

Telehealth is a great way to communicate with your client. However, when conducting business through telehealth, you must be aware of state laws and regulations regarding certain services that require professional licensures. Check with your state licensure department in your state for the required licensure needed to practice in your state for your educational background.

Location

When using telehealth to counsel a client, the patient's location matters. The client's location is considered the "place of service" and the Coach or provider must be licensed in the client's State where the client resides if the services rendered requires licensure to perform the regulated services. Practicing nutrition or any other regulated service across state-lines will require you to be licensed in the state of service of your client this is referred to as Cross State Licensing. Contact the State that you would like to practice in for more information on licensure before you conduct business in a state that you are not licensed.

Stay Within Your Scope of Practice!

It is suggested before starting your business that you check out your state's laws regarding nutrition counseling and what you can and can't do as a Dietitian, Nutritionist, Health Coach, Personal Trainer or other profession.

Below are links from eatrightpro.org and nutritionadvocacy.org. Both have good information that can help you understand your scope of practice in your state.

<http://www.nutritionadvocacy.org/>

<https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/licensure/therapeutic-diet-orders-state-status-and-regulation>

Client-Coach Agreement

Before coaching any client online, your client will need to have a good understanding of the services you offer, and the fees associated with your services. First discuss the needs of your client and then outline the services and fees you are going to provide and charge the client on an official Client/Coach Agreement. Before counseling any client through telehealth, you must have the patient sign the agreement. Not signing an agreement prior to online coaching could leave you vulnerable to issues arising during the counseling session. File transfer is available through your telehealth portal. Nutrition Factors provides a sample agreement for you to use. File transfer is to use, just upload the agreement and have the client sign the agreement and send it back through the portal. Feel free to modify the agreement for your needs. You may also want to show the agreement to your Attorney.

Professional Liability Insurance

You will need to have professional liability insurance for your counseling business that covers telehealth across State Lines and all services you provide. See article on professional liability for companies offering professional liability insurance.

Business License

In order to conduct business as an Independent Contractor you will need a business license and tax Id numbers. Contact your Local City or State government office for more information. In many cities the business license could be free or very inexpensive. Many states have (one-stop-online) service where you can apply for everything online.

Telehealth Reimbursement

Due to parity laws in 30 states, some telehealth services can be reimbursed for the same coverage as an on-site visit. You will need to check with the client's insurance company to find out which services are covered. As telehealth becomes more and more accepted, additional services will be covered. Begin by applying to become a provider with the various insurance companies in your state. Your personal portal can link to your billing source of choice. Companies such as Office Ally provides a free service for billing. If billing insurance companies is going to be part of your business, you should become familiar with payer contracts and Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes as telehealth reimbursement may be different from onsite services. [Telehealth Policy, Regulation and Payment for Nutritionists.](#)

Benefits of Telehealth

Telehealth is a great way to communicate with your client for short or long visits. Clients can speak privately from the convenience of their home. Coaches can assist other healthcare providers without being an employee of the company. Virtual coaches are on the rise and telehealth visits will be the wave of the future to conduct online visits.

Cues from the Patient

One issue that you need to be aware of when conducting a visit with a client are their personal body cues. During your video chat with a client, a tip to remember is to watch your client for non-verbal cues. To be an effective coach pay attention to details and the actions of the client. Since you are not face to face with the client you must pay attention to the verbal and non-verbal cues.

Growth of Telehealth

Patients are becoming more open to the idea of communicating with an online healthcare provider. Telehealth is the wave of the future and is rising quickly.

Just to get you excited about the growth of telehealth, we have cited <https://www.fshealth.com/blog/29-statistics-about-telemedicine-healthcare>

The Growth of TeleHealth

1. “**Market Penetration:** In 2016, telemedicine providers achieved a market penetration of less than .5%, reflecting an estimated [1.25 million telemedicine consultations](#) of this 400+ million potential consults”.
2. “**Potential Annual Employer Savings:** In a 2014 study, Towers Watson concluded that telehealth had the potential to generate [\\$6 billion in annual healthcare cost savings](#) for US. employers”.

3. **“Equivalent Quality of Care:** According to the American Telemedicine Association, [“Studies have consistently shown](#) that the quality of healthcare services delivered via telemedicine are as good those given in traditional in-person consultations.”
4. **“Demand Among Millennials:** 60% of millennials support the use of telehealth to [replace in-office visits](#). with a population of 83 million, millennials now comprise the [largest segment of today’s workforce”](#).

How Patient Feel About Telehealth

- “About 74% of patients in the U.S. would use telehealth services”.
- “Most patients are comfortable with having all of their health records securely available on the cloud”.
- “About 74% of patients are comfortable with communicating with their doctors or coaches using technology instead of seeing them in person”.
- “About 76% of patients care more about access to healthcare than need for human interactions with their healthcare providers”.
- “About 67% of patients said that using telemedicine somewhat or significantly increases their satisfaction with medical care”.
- “About 30% of patients already use computers or mobile devices to check their medical or diagnostic information”.