January 2025

gpTRAC
Great Plains Telehealth
Resource & Assistance Center

Community Health Workers

TELEHEALTH FACT SHEET



Telehealth is defined as the use of telecommunication technologies to support the delivery of health care services. In this case, it will often be to support patients in their home environments.

Telehealth services can use a range of technologies, from easy-to-use cell phones to complex integrated systems that record physiological data and send it directly to an Electronic Health Record (EHR). It is important to have the technology match the goals of your organization, your program, and your clients.

> Telehealth effectively connects individuals and their healthcare providers when in-person care is not necessary or not possible. Using telehealth services, patients can receive care, consult with a provider, get information about a condition or treatment, arrange for prescriptions, and receive a diagnosis.
>
> -American Telemedicine Association

It is critical to note that telehealth is not a service in and of itself, but rather a method by which services are provided. The service may be an assessment, counseling, teaching, or supervision. Telehealth is one method by which these services can be delivered.

WHEN SUPPORTING A TELEHEALTH VISIT, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

VIDEO

Is there good lighting, movement, framing, and stability. Are there any distracting background images? Is there privacy from others hearing?

SPEAKING

Where is the mic? How is the volume of the speaker? Is there background noise?

HEARING

Can the client hear the speaker? Do they know how to use the volume control? Is there background noise? Can they use headphones for privacy?

Connection

Does the client have broadband; is the connection stable? Are they using their phone? Are they on a data plan (how much will you use in the visit/how much have they already used?)

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Telehealth Policy and Community Health Worker Medicaid Reimbursement

Within the gpTRAC region, Minnesota and South Dakota currently have Medicaid reimbursement available for CHW services. Medicaid reimbursement in both states includes telehealth visits – both assisting a patient/client with a telehealth visit from clinic to clinic or helping a patient/client with a telehealth visit from clinic to home, as well as providing CHW services via telehealth.

North Dakota will soon cover CHW services, expected in 2025. It is unclear at this time if North Dakota will also reimburse for telehealth services for CHWs.

How can I help?

- Be the patient's advocate that you are!
- Help the patient to understand that their visit is a PRIVATE visit.
- Encourage the provider to understand challenges the patient may experience attending a visit "in-person".
- Assist the patient/client with initial technology use.
- Help with appropriate technology utilization.
- Understand the various telehealth options and modalities and then advocate for your client as fully as is possible.

Important Resources

- Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance (MNCHWA) - www.mnchwalliance.org
- Community Health Worker Collaborative of South Dakota (CHWSD) - www.chwsd.org
- gpTRAC - Great Plains Telehealth Resource & Assistance Center - www.gptrac.org

  The Great Plains Telehealth Resource & Assistance Center (gpTRAC) is a federally funded program that provides free technical assistance and guidance to telehealth programs of all kinds in the states of South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

CHW Telehealth Success Stories

A CHW in a rural community in South Dakota was able to assist their patient in coordinating a clinic-based telehealth visit that resulted in the patient being given a cancer diagnosis. Had this visit not been conducted via telehealth the patient would not have had the support of the CHW upon hearing of their diagnosis, and they would have also had to have traveled four hours round trip using community transit to receive the news. The CHW was then able to console the patient and work quickly to start addressing their health system navigation needs related to the diagnosis and treatment plan.

A rural CHW provides support via telehealth to a patient in a home setting regarding their diabetes care. This allows the CHW to see inside the home and provide the necessary CHW services without having to travel multiple hours round trip to provide services to the patient.

Other Resources and Tools:

Community Health Workers Help Patients Use Telehealth

https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/preparing-patients-for-telehealth?utm_campaign=OATannouncements20241017&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery