# Introducing the Program

*by Capella Healthcare*

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| ☰ | **WHAT'S COVERED** |

In this lesson, you will learn how to introduce a telehealth program to patients. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Communicating the Program
2. Highlighting Benefits
3. Explaining Privacy and Confidentiality

# 1. Communicating the Program

Telehealth is gaining popularity across disciplines and there are several benefits associated with telehealth, including accommodating seeing patients in rural and underserved areas, improving continuity of care, and increasing convenience for patients by having telehealth opportunities available outside of regular office hours (American Telemed Association, 2020). In addition, telehealth has been especially useful for promoting social distancing during public health emergency situations, such as with **COVID-19**.

Prior to COVID-19, telehealth opportunities for healthcare were typically introduced in the office so the conversation could be entirely handled in person. However, with COVID-19, this initial conversation and introduction to telehealth often happen remotely. Therefore, it is essential to be creative and use multiple channels to educate the patient about telehealth; this will build awareness and maintain engagement.

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| ⚑ | **HINT** |

Rules in some states mandating new patient evaluation visits must be in person have been waived during COVID-19; see your state laws and guidelines for applicability (Lee, I, et al., 2020; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2020).

If you are able to see patients in person, be proactive about introducing telehealth. You should bring up the telehealth opportunities at the end of your clinical visit, explain the benefits, and provide some relevant handout materials for them to take home. Let them know the next steps if they want to take advantage of your telehealth program.

What can you do to help make this initial introduction to telehealth successful? If you have an office newsletter, consider using this to promote the benefits of telehealth and get patients used to the platform you are using for virtual visits. Think about how you can utilize your website and social media sites to discuss ways in which you are available to the patient outside regular office hours. Perhaps hold an open house (either in

person or virtually) to give demonstrations on how to access the platform. Additionally, have a video on your website demonstrating a telehealth visit; it may be helpful to send it to patients as a follow up to your conversation per email or text. Whenever possible, use multiple ways to both communicate and interact.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

**COVID-19**
The official name for the respiratory disease that is causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, first identified in Wuhan, China.

# 2. Highlighting Benefits

Start all communication by simply defining what telehealth is and highlighting the benefits of telehealth for the patient, including:

- No transportation time or costs
- Reduced waiting times
- No need for waiting rooms and exposure to infectious disease
- Greater access to care after regular business hours
- Potential cost savings for childcare
- Availability to a physician after normal business hours

# 3. Explaining Privacy and Confidentiality

Since patient privacy and confidentiality will be the main concern for patients, be sure to include a statement about your data encryption, storage, privacy, and **HIPAA** compliance practices. Explain how to access your patient portal or virtual meeting platform and have step-by-step directions with pictures. Connect patients with staff to assist them in accessing the portal. Videos demonstrating how to access the portal can be showcased on your website or sent to patients via text or email; consider including testimonials from patients that are representative of your patient population.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

**HIPAA**
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996; provides guidance on protecting sensitive patient health information.

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# Support

If you are struggling with a concept or terminology in the course, you may contact **TelehealthSupport@capella.edu** for assistance.

If you are having technical issues, please contact **learningcoach@sophia.org**.

### TERMS TO KNOW

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