THE NO-NONSENSE GUIDE TO GO-LIVE
WITH TELEHEALTH SERVICES

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS EXPLORING HOW TO GET STARTED WITH TELEHEALTH

Let's be honest, the hardest part of any project is getting started—especially a project as large as incorporating telehealth services into your Community Health Center. This guide provides the questions you should be asking and how you can take the first steps to begin a successful telehealth program.

The biggest barrier to getting started when designing your telehealth program is analysis paralysis. This phenomenon occurs as a result of overanalyzing a situation to the point where no solution is created. When defining patient-outcome goals or conducting a cost-benefit analysis, you may think of too many "what-if's" that hinder you from taking action. It's only natural when you have to choose a telehealth service to implement and the staff to support it, as well as ensure your program is in compliance with applicable state and federal laws. Luckily, Certintell created a simple three-step process (the SET Method) to help your health center start defining what your telehealth program will involve: Survey what resources you have, Execute the plan you've defined, and Transition any processes that need improvement.

Step 1: SURVEY

❏ Define the team that will lead the Community Health Center's telehealth workflows and apply applicable state and federal laws to your telehealth program. We recommend a team of five or seven people, depending on health center size.

  ❏ One of the best sources of applicable laws comes from The Center for Connected Health Policy of the Public Health Institute; review current state laws and reimbursement policies here.

❏ Work closely with your local PCA, HCCN or applicable GPO to see how they can help fulfill your health center's needs. There may be recommended vendor partners or group discounts they can provide that are ideal for starting a telehealth program. Questions to answer and bring to your local affiliate(s) when weighing options:

  ❏ Define the initial goal for your telehealth program: Will telehealth help you better support outcome measures or give added incentive payments for high-quality and cost-effective care (eg. Alternative Payment Model)? Do you need to get started quickly to support current patient demands?

  ❏ What specific gaps in health care does your patient population have that telehealth can help fill? Travel distance? Ensuring at-risk patients are actively monitored? Safety concerns if the patient leaves the home?

  ❏ What are you trying to achieve? Improve patient outcomes? Reduce physician burnout? There are ways to orient your telehealth usage around these goals.

❏ What services do you want to offer? Primary Care? Mental Health Services? Acute Care? With the right vendor partner, telehealth can help you do all of these.

Step 2: EXECUTE

❏ Now that you've reviewed your state laws and how local affiliates can support your team, time to choose an available solution that fits your needs. Questions to ask possible telehealth vendor partners:
  ❏ How can a vendor partner compliment or benefit your current EHR framework?
  ❏ Does the vendor partner's solution have HIPAA-compliant policies and procedures in place? Ask if they've been independently certified and if they cover all telehealth modalities.
  ❏ If your health center is using non-compliant technology in light of COVID-19 (e.g. Facetime), will your solution be viable long-term after the current PHE policy changes? Make sure the solution you're looking at is viable outside any PHE and under applicable state and federal laws.
  ❏ Does the vendor partner's solution offer technologies for patients that allow you to measure vitals from the comfort of their homes? That should include pulse oximeters, blood pressure monitors, glucometers and body weight scales.
  ❏ Do the new technologies add value to the patient experience, since they can't be seen in person? Remote Patient Monitoring and Chronic Care Management are two specific services that can support patients long-term and support the sustainability of starting a telehealth program.
❏ Does every team member understand the telehealth programs that will be offered and what the workflows look like? Ensure every team member that will be involved in patient care delivered through telehealth has hands-on training or shadowing. Here are two example workflows from Certintell partner clinics:
  ● Provider workflow delivering care from the clinic
  ● Provider workflow delivering care from their home

Step 3: TRANSITION

❏ There will always be workflows and processes to improve. See what tasks are taking the longest to complete and try to reduce the time taken for those specific areas by continuously accepting feedback from your team. We recommend allowing anonymous feedback to provide an open and honest feedback loop with your team.
❏ Review all costs associated with your telehealth program. You can make telehealth services sustainable; if they're not, then you need to review a new vendor or improve processes. Revenue Cycle Management needs to be carefully planned and tracked. Review claims and payments regularly to define potential areas to refine your approach.
❏ Understand the patient's perspective and subsequent feedback to improve their experience. Are patients well educated about your new process and benefits it can provide? Ensure your team is working toward creating the best possible patient experience.
❏ Now that you understand the patient perspective, look at the provider perspective. How satisfied are they and what can be done to make this change more beneficial for providers?

❑ Measure patient outcomes. Are your patients seeing lower readmission rates, hospitalizations and staying out of the ER?

CONCLUSION

The most important step from above is what comes after TRANSITION. This is a learning CYCLE, not a START-to-END solution. After the TRANSITION step comes *REPEAT*. Your core telehealth team should always be referring back to any new state or federal laws; understanding what new offerings your PCA, HCCN or GPO provides; regularly contacting the vendor partner you've chosen (we recommend quarterly or every six months); and ensuring your staff is educated on what improvements are coming to the telehealth solution and processes.

What to check out other resources for getting telehealth services started at your health center? We've compiled the below options for you:
- National Association of Community Health Centers' *Telehealth Implementation Quick Guide*
- The California Telehealth Resource Center's *Telehealth Implementation Roadmap*
- American Medical Association's *Telehealth Implementation Playbook*

Support

To learn more about the current telehealth landscape and options available, schedule an overview HERE.

For more information on the JoinCareTeam™ telehealth platform, contact info@certintell.com or 800-946-9143.