

## Contents

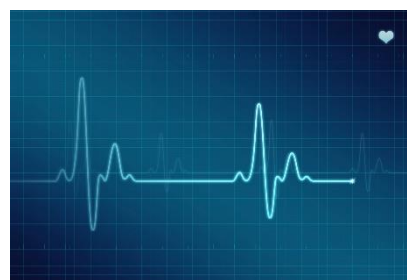
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## Overview

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Telehealth is defined as health care that is delivered remotely via various forms of technology such as live-video, phone call or text messaging. Telehealth can provide access to health care without having to travel to an in-person appointment. More health providers are expanding their telehealth options.



As noted in the Montana Digital Opportunity Plan (DOP), “The state of Montana encompasses extensive and sparsely populated land. Many residents live in remote areas, many hours from healthcare facilities. Making the trip for routine checkups can be both time-consuming and costly. For rural Montanans, in particular, telehealth may be key to making healthcare affordable and accessible.”

According to various sources, the most common telehealth services are for mental/behavioral health, psychiatry, or addiction treatment. Other common telehealth services include chronic disease management, family medicine and wellness/preventative consultations. The Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS), Montana’s Rural Health Plan notes that, “Rural Montana communities have long relied upon telehealth services to enhance access to primary care visits and mental health counseling.” The state plan includes recommendations for expanding telehealth including an increase in broadband access and expansion of facilities to provide distant site services.

A Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center survey notes that the most common barrier to the delivery of telehealth services is the lack of patient resources such as Internet or computer devices. The Montana Digital Opportunity Plan includes an objective which states, “Individuals throughout Montana having access to several device options should enable the State to help

realize its health goals, especially telehealth.” As noted below, libraries can play an important role in meeting telehealth needs.

“Libraries can help bridge this gap by providing a safe, private, reliable location to access telehealth services with staff who can help patients use the technology. As highly trusted and well-connected institutions within their community, libraries are a perfect place to build or expand a community’s telehealth infrastructure.”

*(Source: Library Telehealth 101: A Guide to Getting Started, Idaho Commission for Libraries)*

Libraries interested in providing a telehealth site should work with local county health officials and health care providers to determine strategies for meeting community needs and to identify partnering and funding opportunities. This guide provides tips for establishing telehealth distant site services at the library.

## Considerations for Establishing Telehealth in Libraries

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Libraries should consider the following prior to establishing a telehealth distant site.

1. Does the library have a private space that can be used for telehealth consultations? What are potential upgrades and costs to set-up to the space for telehealth?
2. Does the library have enough staff to provide assistance to people who are using the telehealth service? Individuals using telehealth services are not always tech savvy, so they may need assistance before, during, and after the appointment.
3. Is the telehealth provider able to provide remote assistance? Will they work with library staff if there are technology challenges?
4. What training will staff need to be able to offer this service? Staff may need training on the privacy standards of the health industry. They may also need training on how to use the software and troubleshoot common issues that arise.
5. Does anyone else in the community offer this service already? Or if no one offers it but the library doesn’t have the capacity, is there another organization in the community that can partner with the library to provide the service? Are there potential partners to assist the library with funding, training or other needs to establish a telehealth site?

### Telehealth Room Set-up

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Setting up a telehealth space in the library requires designating a room that ensures privacy and provides the necessary technology. The room setup for virtual telehealth meetings should include the following:

- Computer equipped with video camera, speakers, and a microphone.
- Reliable Internet/broadband access adequate to use web-based applications and video.
- Proper sound treatment to block out noise and ensure privacy for individuals.
- Proper lighting so the provider can see the patient's condition and window shades to reduce glare.
- Minimal clutter on desk & walls to provide clean visual background that will not distract users.
- Desk space and power outlets for users that bring their own devices.
- Headphones to offer more privacy and block out background noises. (Clean after each use.)
- If available, a carpeted room (or rug) will help reduce noise.

The Idaho "Library Telehealth 101 Guide" provides tips for set-up, cleaning, and other tips for maintaining equipment.

## Best Practices for Libraries

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### Technology

- All computers will need a wi-fi or ethernet connection. An average telehealth connection will use about 10-20 mbps. If there are multiple devices on the network, plan for 100 mbps for every eight computers. Use a speed test to verify the speed of the computer in the telehealth room.
- For privacy purposes, separate the telehealth wi-fi channel from an open public access network and require a unique password to use the telehealth wi-fi service.
- Staff should be prepared to provide technical support if equipment or broadband is not working.
- Computers should have updated browsers to allow video-conferencing. (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams ...) If partnering with a telehealth provider, they may have specific software to install.

### Policies

- Establish procedure for reserving the telehealth space. Options include reserving by phone, e-mail, or an on-line scheduling platform. Include a check-in/check-out process. Recommend users arrive 15 minutes early to get set-up and test equipment. Offer an orientation session for first-time users.
- Establish policies for what is acceptable use of space. It should include a statement that the space may not be used for illegal activity. Specify who is allowed to use the space (i.e., minors?)
- Determine if and how space can be used when not scheduled for a telehealth appointment.
- Privacy – To comply with HIPAA guidelines, reservation process should limit any personal information that is collected beyond the name and contact info. Staff should not share the names of patrons that are using the telehealth services. (i.e., do not post a schedule listing names that is visible to non-staff . If working with a telehealth provider, consult with them on privacy policies).
- Include educational materials for patrons on tips for a successful telehealth experience. (<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/patients/what-do-i-need-use-telehealth>)
- After each user is checked-out, make sure the room is prepared prior to the next scheduled appointment. Clear history on computer, remove trash or other paperwork that may have been left by previous user.
- Conduct staff training on policies and procedures for telehealth room.

## Resources

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Montana Digital Opportunity Plan

<https://connectmt.mt.gov>

Montana Dept. of Health and Human Services, "State Rural Health Plan -2021,"

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/>

Montana Telehealth Association

<https://www.montanatelehealth.org/>

U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration

<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/>

Broadband USA - Digital Equity:

<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs>

Northwest Regional Telehealth Center

<https://nrtrc.catalog.instructure.com/courses/navigating-the-telehealth-neighborhood-a-guide-to-telehealth-access-for-digital-navigators>

Idaho Commission for Libraries, Telehealth in Libraries

<https://libraries.idaho.gov/telehealth/>