10 TIPS:

Selecting TELEHEALTH TECHNOLOGY

1 The Services

First, determine what service(s) you are intending to deliver with the use of technology.

Determining the service will also help you decide what mode of telehealth you will be using to provide such services. There are three modalities through which services are provided via telehealth: Live Video, Store-and-Forward, and Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM). For example, if you are providing management of a chronic condition, you may wish to be able to do so through live video and RPM. But if you are only offering tele-mental health services, you may only use live video.

MODALITIES OF TELEHEALTH:

#1 Live Video is two-way interaction between a person (patient, caregiver, or provider) and a provider using audiovisual telecommunications technology. This type of service is also referred to as "real-time" and may serve as a substitute for an in-person encounter when it is not available.

#2 Store-and-forward technologies allow for the electronic transmission of medical information, such as digital images, documents, and pre-recorded videos through secure email communication.

#3 Remote patient monitoring (RPM) uses digital technologies to collect medical and other forms of health data from individuals in one location and electronically transmit that information securely to health care providers.

2 The Location

What is the location, of both the patient and the provider, when the telehealth interaction takes place?

The size of the location may help you determine how large or small the equipment can/should be and how mobile it must be. Will you need to move the equipment between different rooms? Is this equipment available in the patient's home? Keep in mind the strength of the connectivity in these locations. Your telehealth encounter will not work if there is no or a weak connection, so ensure there is adequate bandwidth and connectivity.

Reimbursement 3

Depending on the payer, some modalities of telehealth are not reimbursable.

For example, if you are servicing a primarily Medicaid population, first check the specific Medicaid program's telehealth reimbursement policies. They may only reimburse for live video and/or specific services while other modalities like store-and-forward and RPM may not be reimbursed.

4 Equipment

Ensure that the equipment you select works with the parties who will be using it.

For example, if you expect people with vision impairments to use the equipment, ensure that the equipment will work for this population either by providing verbal directions, voice activation, or large and clear displays.
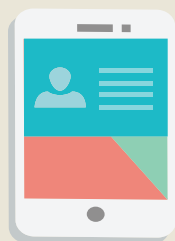
Testing 5

Always test the equipment before you buy!

If possible, have the people who are going to use the equipment be the testers.

Training & Service Plans **6**

Ensure that there is training included with the purchase of the equipment.

Sometimes, vendors will simply sell a program, the equipment, and deliver it without providing additional information. Make sure the vendor will provide set up and installation, as well as training to users, and remember to inquire about service plans and warranties in case issues arise a few months later.
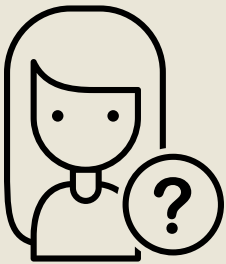
7 # Remember to Upgrade
Technology can rapidly become obsolete

......ALWAYS INQUIRE ABOUT UPGRADES AND ASSOCIATED FEES.

8 # Interoperability

Check with the vendor to see how the telehealth equipment will work with your current system, such as your electronic health records (EHR).

- Will a bridge between the two systems need to be built and does the vendor offer that?
- Does your program intend to enter information in the EHR some other way?

Equipment alone cannot make you HIPAA compliant and a vendor should not say their product will make you HIPAA compliant.

HIPAA Compliancy **9**

Technology can help you reach HIPAA compliancy but meeting HIPAA and many other privacy laws and regulations require human actions, such as ensuring proper protocols are in place for protected health information (PHI) by training staff on the handling of PHI. Telehealth equipment features, such as encryption capabilities, can assist a program in ensuring HIPAA compliance.

10 Consider Business Associate Agreements

A program must determine if a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) needs to be signed between itself and a telehealth equipment vendor. The need for a BAA would depend on what the equipment does and how much access the vendor may have to The PHI. Assess whether the vendor rises to the level of an entity that needs to sign a BAA.

EXTRA BONUS TIP!

Contact your telehealth resource center (TRC) for more information.
The TRCs offer free technical assistance to organizations trying to start up a telehealth program. The TRC on technology is the National Telehealth Technology Assessment Center (TTAC).

National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers

National Telehealth Technology Assessement Center

AMCHP
ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS
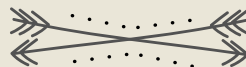
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