



Using Telehealth to Receive Behavioral Health Services During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Health care providers are now offering telehealth services. These are appointments by phone or video to reduce in-person interactions during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This document provides information on what to expect if you receive telehealth services for mental health, substance use or developmental disabilities during COVID-19.

What is telehealth?

- Telehealth is when you receive health care services by phone or video instead of having an in-person visit.

What kinds of telehealth services can I receive?

- Many health care services can be provided using telehealth. You can receive telehealth services such as assessing your strengths and needs, screening for illness and therapy.
- Contact your health care providers to learn more about what services they can provide using telehealth.

How is my privacy protected?

- Federal and State privacy protections (like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA]) still apply to protect your confidentiality and privacy. Speak to your provider about how they will keep your information private when you are receiving telehealth services.
- Applications that allow for video chats, including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, Zoom or Skype can be used for telehealth during COVID-19. Applications that are publicly viewed such as Tiktok, Facebook Live and Twitch **should not** to be used for telehealth.
- Telehealth services may not be recorded without your consent.

Can I give consent for telehealth services over the phone?

- Yes, you can give consent over the phone.

If I have Medicaid or Medicare, am I able to receive telehealth services?

- Yes, Medicaid and Medicare recipients can receive telehealth services.

Will I have to pay for telehealth services?

- New York State has expanded telehealth services and reduced cost-sharing for Medicaid, New York State marketplace, and other health plans covered by New York State Law during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Medicare has also temporarily expanded coverage of telehealth services, as have other plans not governed by New York State law. Please check with your health plan for information regarding coverage.

- To better understand your insurance rights, you can contact the Community Health Access to Addiction and Mental Healthcare Project help line at 888-614-5400.

Can I receive telehealth services for substance use and substance use disorder?

- Yes, substance use treatment providers in New York State can provide services using telehealth, except for methadone treatment.

Can I be prescribed medication using telehealth services?

- Providers can prescribe some types of medication, including medication for opioid use disorder, such as buprenorphine, by phone or video without an in-person evaluation.
- However, some types of medication, such as methadone, may require an in-person visit. Speak with your health care provider to determine whether the medications you need can be prescribed remotely.
- If you are interested in starting buprenorphine for the first time, you can call New York Health and Hospitals' Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic at 212-562-2664 to schedule a telehealth appointment.

I do not have a regular provider but need to speak to someone about my mental health or substance use. Can I use telehealth for initial visits?

- Yes, providers can see new patients using telehealth technology.
- Speak to your insurance provider, go onto your health plan website or call **311** for health care providers in your area.
- Visit nyc.gov/nycwell to find a mental health or substance use provider. You can also talk, text or chat with a counselor 24/7 in over 200 languages for brief counseling and support and to receive a referral to care. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell.

I do not have insurance. Can I use telehealth services?

- If you are uninsured or recently lost employer-provided health insurance, New York City can help. Call **311** and say "Get covered NYC" to connect with someone who can help you through the enrollment process. You can also email getcoverednyc@hra.nyc.gov for more information.
- To get more information on insurance options in New York State, you can also visit nystateofhealth.ny.gov or call 855-355-5777.
- If you are not eligible for any health insurance plan, cannot afford insurance coverage or do not have money to pay for medical care, you can get care through the NYC Health + Hospitals. Visit nychealthandhospitals.org or call 844-NYC-4NYC (888-692-4692) or **311** for more information.

What if I need to be seen in-person?

- If you think you need to be seen for an in-person visit, call your provider before going to their office. If your provider determines that an in-person visit is needed, they can schedule you in a manner that helps keep you safe.
- If you are experiencing an emergency go to a nearby emergency room or call **911**.

How do I prepare for a telehealth appointment?

- Check with your provider to learn more about what services they provide using telehealth and to schedule an appointment.
- Verify your insurance and billing information with your provider or insurance company.
- Check your technology. Make sure the platform or application you will use is working. Make a test video call or try the computer application sometime before your appointment time. If you plan to use headphones, use them during your test call to make sure the person on the other end of the phone or video call can hear you clearly.
- Find a space where you feel comfortable speaking. Try to choose a space that is private and where you will not be interrupted during your appointment. If privacy is difficult within your home, consider downloading a white noise application onto another device and play the white noise near the door during your appointment. Brainstorm with your provider to think of other ways to increase your comfort and privacy.
- Think about questions you have for your provider or information you would like to share about your symptoms or condition. You may want to write these down in advance.
- On the day of the appointment:
 - Make sure your device is charged and necessary applications are working.
 - Call or log in to your appointment a few minutes ahead of time.
- If you need help with phone or internet access:
 - Households with K-12 and college students, and those who qualify as low-income, may receive free Wi-Fi/internet. Call your internet service provider to see if you qualify for free or reduced cost internet/Wi-Fi service.
 - Many cell phone and internet companies are offering unlimited data plans for no additional charge. Call your service provider for more information.
 - If you subscribe to SafeLink Wireless, you may be eligible to receive up to 350 minutes and 3GB of data. Call 800-SAFELINK (800-723-3546) for enrollment and plan changes support.
 - You may qualify for Lifeline, a federal program that helps lower the cost of your monthly phone or internet bill. You can qualify if you participate in a government benefit program or your income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. To learn more about Lifeline and to see if you qualify, visit [lifelinesupport.org](https://www.lifelinesupport.org) or call 800-234-9473.