

A Social Work Guide to Telehealth in Hawai'i

In Hawai'i, telehealth practice (the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health and health administration) is subject to the same standards as traditional practice. The social worker must comply with guidelines for the locations of the social worker *and* the client. The social worker must accurately represent themselves and practice within their competencies. Informed consent must be expanded to address additional risks of using technology.

Please review the following:

NASW Code of Ethics with 2017 highlighted revisions regarding the use of technology in the provision of professional services: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Highlighted-Revisions-to-the-Code-of-Ethics>

NASW's Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice:
https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards_FINAL_POSTING.pdf

Risk Management: Treading Through Teletherapy Treatment Topics:
<https://naswassurance.org/malpractice/malpractice-tips/treading-through-teletherapy-treatment-topics/>

What Telehealth Platform to Use

NASW-HI does not endorse any telehealth platform. We do recommend that you do **not** use a non-HIPAA compliant platform. HIPAA compliance has been mirroring technological change. Ensuring that your platform is HIPAA compliant is critical so as to reduce your risk and to maintain patient privacy.

Insurance Coverage for Telehealth Services

Insurance coverage for teletherapy services is impacted by federal and state laws, as well as individual insurance company policies. Providers should check with their liability insurance and their patient's insurance plan regarding how telehealth services are covered.

Medicare

Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) covers certain telehealth services. The Medicare enrollee will pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for the healthcare provider's services, and the Part B deductible applies. For most telehealth services, the Medicare enrollee will pay the same amount that they would if they got the services in person. Part B covers mental health services provided by LCSWs.

Medicaid

There shall be no restrictions on originating site requirements for telehealth coverage or reimbursement under this section. "Originating site" means the location where the patient is located, whether accompanied or not by a health care provider, at the time services are provided by a health care provider through telehealth, including but not limited to a health care provider's office, hospital, critical access hospital, rural health clinic, federally qualified health center, a patient's home, and other non-medical environments such as school-based health centers, university-based health centers, or the work location of a patient.

"Health care provider" means a provider of services, as defined in title 42 United States Code section 1395x(u), a provider of medical and other health services, as defined in title 42 United States Code section 1395x(s), other practitioners licensed by the State and working within their scope of practice, and any other person or organization who furnishes, bills, or is paid for health care in the normal course of business, including but not limited to primary care providers, mental health providers, oral health providers, physicians and osteopathic physicians licensed under chapter 453, advanced practice registered nurses licensed under chapter 457, psychologists licensed under chapter 465, and dentists licensed under chapter 448.

See HI Revised Statutes § 346-59.1(b).

Private Insurance

Hawai'i has a telehealth parity law, meaning that the state legally requires private insurance companies to cover telehealth services. Many still do, but it depends on the company and policy.

Interstate Telehealth Services

The licensing board for a state has jurisdiction when a client is physically in their state, so that state's board decides if you are in compliance with their laws and rules when you work with someone who is inside their borders. Quite a few licensing boards have provisions for licensees of other states to practice temporarily with clients in their state. It is imperative to check the social work licensure rules in the state within which a potential client resides to determine if you are eligible to practice temporarily.

Telemedicine CPT Codes

Unique CPT codes do not exist specifically for telemedicine or telehealth. Instead a modifier is applied to existing codes. For interactive audio and video sessions, place a GT modifier in front of the CPT codes you typically use for in person services. For services provided via an asynchronous telecommunication system, simply add a GQ modifier in front of the CPT codes you typically use for in person services.

Useful Resources

1. <https://mtelehealth.com/home/reimbursement-policies/north-carolina-state-telehealth-laws-and-reimbursement-policies/>
2. <https://www.cchpca.org/telehealth-policy/current-state-laws-and-reimbursement-policies?jurisdiction=62&category=All&topic=All>
3. <https://personcenteredtech.com/2018/11/06/telemental-health-across-state-lines-doing-it-legally/>
4. <https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/telehealth>
5. <https://blog.evisit.com/telemedicine-informed-patient-consent-done-right-way>

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