



# Risk Advisory Notice:

## Providing Telehealth: Virtual Sessions



### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is placing health and social care services in Ireland under considerable pressure and requires different ways of assessing and treating service users. Telehealth offers a virtual connection to the service user, ensuring they continue to receive the necessary clinical support, care and treatment, whilst protecting them from an increased risk of acquiring COVID-19 in a health or social care environment.

### Scope

The Clinical Risk Unit in the State Claims Agency offers this general advice for those undertaking virtual sessions. It is recognised that the extent to which all of these advices can be implemented will depend on the availability of local resources, including capacity which may be constrained by the COVID-19 response.

### Planning a virtual session

- ✓ Seek and document confirmation of agreement from both corporate / clinical governance structures within the organisation / service regarding the proposed virtual sessions, e.g. e-health initiatives, virtual clinics, use of Apps, etc.
- ✓ Develop a policy / protocol / guidance / pathway for the implementation of the virtual sessions
- ✓ Establish that the service user has a suitable device and confirm that they will be able to use this for the session
- ✓ If a video consultation is required, ensure the platform supporting the consultation is secure from an IT security perspective, and that any recordings of the session are stored in compliance with the *Data Protection Act 2018* (GDPR)
- ✓ Explain this approach to the service user, including the benefits and limitations
- ✓ Obtain verbal consent of the service user / parent / legal guardian to engage with and use the virtual session
- ✓ Provide a written description of the proposed

### What is Telehealth?

**Telehealth, also known as telemedicine, refers to the remote delivery of services by health and social care professionals using information and communication technologies such as telephone, video or audio conferencing, electronic messaging, digital photography, instant messaging or other technologies.**

virtual session to the service user (and / or parent(s) / legal guardians(s) of a child), with a view to seeking consent to engage and participate in the session, to include:

- How the appointment will be communicated, e.g. by text, instant messaging or email

- Details of appointment, i.e. date, time of commencement and expected duration (if known)
- Extent of flexibility (if any) to change appointment date / time
- Details of who will be conducting the session

## Conducting and documenting a virtual session

- ✓ Introduce yourself clearly
- ✓ Confirm the identity of the service user by verifying the service user's name, date of birth and address
- ✓ If the service user is a child: confirm the identity of the child (depending on age) and the parent(s) / legal guardians(s) by verifying the child's name, date of birth and address.
- ✓ Explain the format of the virtual session, including the benefits and limitations of a non-face-to-face session
- ✓ Obtain verbal consent of the service user / parent / legal guardian to participate in the virtual session
- ✓ Document if the virtual session is an initial consultation or a follow-up review
- ✓ Document whether or not the service user/parent(s) / legal guardian(s) is / are known to you (and the circumstances if not)
- ✓ Document detailed notes of the virtual session, including assessment (subjective and objective), treatment prescribed, any guidance / advices provided, a plan of care and details regarding further follow-up /review
- ✓ Should the service user require a face-to-face consultation or referral, inform the individual and document the reasons for this
- ✓ Provide a contact number to the service user / parent(s) / legal guardian(s) should they require clarification or have queries / concerns regarding the virtual session
- ✓ Clearly date, time and sign all entries regarding the virtual session including duration of consultation in the service user's record



### For further information or support:

Please get in touch with us via [stateclaims@ntma.ie](mailto:stateclaims@ntma.ie)

### References:

1. Orlando J, Beard M & Sarvana K (2019) Systematic review of patient and caregivers' satisfaction with telehealth video conferencing as a mode of service delivery in managing patients' health. PLOS ONE. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221848> August 30, 2019
2. World Health Organisation (2010) Telemedicine. Opportunities and developments in Member States. Report on the second global survey on eHealth. Global Observatory for eHealth series - Volume 2. Available [here](#).

**\*The State Claims Agency (SCA) has provided this advice with reasonable care and skill based on its experience of claims management and analysis**