

A woman with long blonde hair and black-rimmed glasses is sitting at a wooden table. She is wearing a white and blue striped sweater and blue jeans. She is looking at a silver laptop in front of her. The background is a brick wall. A red bag is on a chair behind her. The text "How to Get Started in Telemedicine" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

How to Get Started in Telemedicine



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What is Telemedicine?

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At TherapySites, we provide this technology through our Tele-Counseling platform. Tele-Counseling is a secure HIPAA- and HITECH-compliant telemedicine video counseling platform. It gives you the ability to interact with clients from virtually anywhere. You can expand the reach of your practice and avoid cancellations or no-shows.

Industry Information and Trends

Telemedicine research, implementation, and policy have made great improvements. This shows no sign of stopping any time soon. The global telemedicine market is projected to increase to \$36.3 billion by 2020. At the time of writing, there are now thirty-six states in the U.S. that require private insurance companies to reimburse telemedicine sessions in the same way as in-person sessions.

Many people have become more open to technology-based solutions. Telemedicine is appealing to younger populations. They are much more receptive to technology-based health services. Studies show that 66% of Americans are willing to have online sessions with their provider using secure messaging and video platforms. West Monroe Partners found that 80% of consumers prefer mobile communication with their provider over an office visit.

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Benefits of Telemedicine for Your Practice

As you're considering telemedicine for your practice, you'll need to determine your desired outcomes. This will inform your strategy and approach as you work toward full implementation. Below are some of the most common desired outcomes. Consider which outcomes best match your practice needs and goals.



Greater Access to Mental Health Services

Telemedicine provides easier access to mental health services. There is a large mental health provider shortage in the United States. Telemedicine services close this gap. This is especially true in underserved and rural communities. Clients transitioning from in-patient to out-patient care can also benefit from telemedicine so that they aren't "lost" during their transition period.



Flexible and Timely Care

Having a "virtual office" is a compelling reason to add telemedicine to your practice. Telemedicine allows you to spend less time at your brick and mortar office. You can work from home or while traveling or serve clients who can't come to your physical practice.

Clients can sometimes only see you during unconventional hours or on weekends. Telemedicine allows you to set your own hours of operation or work from any location. Being able to access care in a timely and flexible way makes a positive difference in client outcomes.



Improved Practice Revenue

Telemedicine improves your practice from an economic standpoint. By diversifying service offerings, you can create new streams of revenue. Not only does it increase revenue, but it also acts as a financial buffer if you experience no-shows and cancellations.



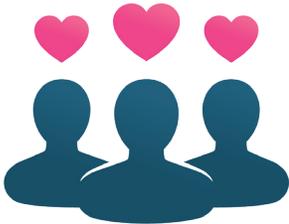
Reduced Cancellations and No-Shows

In the United States, clients cancel 15 to 20 percent of scheduled visits last-minute. Or don't show up at all. Losing one in five scheduled appointments adds up to a significant loss of revenue over the course of one year. Telemedicine allows you to reschedule right away to reduce missed appointments. This protects your revenue and ensures clients receive the consistent care they need.



Proactive Forward-Thinking Practice

Many providers want to create a modern, competitive practice. Telemedicine allows them to be proactive instead of reactive to new modes of treatment delivery. Telemedicine is approaching mainstream adoption and every practice is going to need to put telemedicine into place to some degree.



Retain Clients After Location or Schedule Changes

There's nothing more difficult for a client than having to start over. Building rapport with a new provider takes time. Telemedicine allows you to keep clients if they must change locations or schedules. If you're licensed in the state they live in, you can treat them virtually from any location.

Being able to adapt to any of these changes also increases accountability for the client. When you can work from nearly any time or location, there are fewer reasons to not show up for an appointment. This removes real or imagined barriers to treatment and increases a client's accountability for their own care.

How Do I Implement Telemedicine?

Assess Your Practice

Start by asking yourself how telemedicine fits into your practice model. These are a few good questions to start with:

Do you experience missed or lost revenue?

Do you have clients who would benefit from telemedicine?

Can your services be remotely delivered to your client base?

Will you use telemedicine as a supplement or alternative mode of treatment?



Do Your Research

You also need to research the regulatory landscape in which you practice. Each state has its own regulations for reimbursement and licensure. Familiarize yourself with these by doing research or contacting your state licensure board.

Telemedicine is approaching mainstream approval in the USA. Private payer insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid allow for telemedicine reimbursement. And if you bill clients out of pocket, you can start without the hassle of insurance regulation.

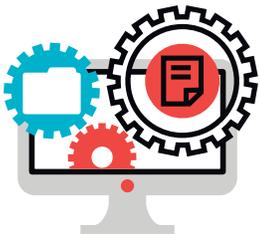


Plan Your Return on Investment

Telemedicine almost always has a favorable return on investment. TherapySites forecasts an ROI of about 200-300% as the ideal goal to plan for. Our Tele-Counseling platform has a low cost of implementation compared to the revenue it can generate.

Consider the following factors to determine the return on investment for your practice:

- Investigate how you will market your new services to current and potential clients.
- Determine your most time effective and financially effective methods of reimbursement.
- Decide which software platform fits your desired outcomes and can grow with your practice.
- Consider how many lost or rescheduled sessions you experience on average and decide if telemedicine could salvage those lost appointments.



Implement the Software Platform

Check the onboarding process for the software provider you're considering. Some level of training and onboarding support should be provided. The best companies will also give you advice on how to market your telemedicine services. This might include directories, social media, or print media you distribute to clients.



Make Your First Call

Simply prepare for your first call and then make it. Make a few test calls with a colleague or friends and family if you have time. This will make sure that everything is correctly configured. Show up early, check your internet speed, and make sure the software is set up properly. Make sure you and your client have the necessary software and hardware.



Evaluate Your Experience

This step is easy to overlook, but make sure you take time to reflect on your experience. Get some feedback from your clients about their experience in the session. Review your desired outcomes and make sure telemedicine is achieving them. This will ensure that you're using the software in a way that will maximize your return on investment.



What Do I Look for In A Telemedicine Company?

Privacy, anonymity, and security are crucial for your practice and your clients. Some clients prefer telemedicine because of the privacy and reduced stigma it offers.

These are a few of the most important security features you should look for:

HIPAA Compliance

Any telemedicine session requires HIPAA compliant software. Never use any software that is not HIPAA compliant (such as Skype, Facetime, or Google Hangouts). Doing so could put your licensure at risk or result in hefty fines. The video feed and any activity must take place within an encrypted environment. Protected information, all messages, and the video feed itself need to be encrypted with at least 128-bit encryption.

Business Associate Agreements

Ask the software company if they provide a business associate agreement that is vendor and provider specific. If they don't, you shouldn't go any further with that company.

Continually Tested and Updated Software

Annual risk assessments and security penetration testing should be conducted on the software. This ensures that it remains HIPAA compliant and safe for your practice and your clients. It also allows for the software platform to continually improved.

Trial Period or Live Demo

Make sure that you can try a demo of the software platform or see if the company provides a free trial period. This will enable you to vet the software to make sure it matches your desired outcomes. It will also allow you to resolve any questions, so you don't experience any disruptions during later sessions with clients.

TherapySites and Tele-Counseling

If you have more questions or would like additional resources about incorporating telemedicine into your practice, contact TherapySites today. Our Tele-Counseling secure video counseling platform meets and exceeds all the recommendations in this whitepaper.

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