

Preparing for Teledentistry

A Guide for Dental Practices

About the Guide


This guide for dental practices (Guide) is intended to inform planning for teledentistry. Teledentistry facilitates remote assessment, triage, and provision of dental care where possible and appropriate.¹ Oral health care providers use teledentistry to deliver screenings and consultations, diagnose and triage dental conditions, prescribe antibiotics or other medications, and provide advice, reminders, and education.^{2,3}

Delivering services virtually requires a practice to take steps to implement new technology, obtain staff and patient buy-in, redesign workflows, and assess practice and patient needs, among other things. The self-assessment questionnaire (questionnaire), along with supporting guidance included in this Guide, can help practices identify select areas for improvement and increase readiness to adopt teledentistry. Guide content was developed by the Maryland Health Care Commission in collaboration with stakeholders.

Instructions

Complete the questionnaire below by selecting the response option that most accurately reflects practice considerations. The “In Context” statements are intended to clarify self-assessment questions. Refer to the “Supporting Guidance” (see linked arrows to the right of each question) for relevant resources. Calculate the overall practice score by adding the total “Yes” responses in each section. Score ranges included in the “Understanding Your Results” section provide a perspective on practice preparedness for teledentistry.



Section 1: Planning

In Context	Has your practice considered...	Yes	No	Supporting Guidance
Costs associated with teledentistry depend on several factors, including, and not limited to, existing technical infrastructure, services to be provided, and desired hardware and software features. ^{4,5} Sustainability of teledentistry is supported by assessing expenses and return on investment. ⁶	1. Capital costs (e.g., equipment, software, training), associated with implementing a teledentistry program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Obtaining informed consent prior to providing services via teledentistry is not only a best practice to ensure that a patient understands how care will be delivered, it is also a requirement in most states, including Maryland. ^{7, 8}	2. How to obtain and document patient consent for teledentistry services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Disruption to practice processes is minimized by identifying areas where staff roles and responsibilities will be impacted by teledentistry. ^{9, 10}	3. Mapping practice workflows to assess where processes will need to shift to accommodate teledentistry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implementing teledentistry takes dedication and buy-in from the entire staff. Staff recognition of the benefits and need for virtual visits improves acceptance of technology. ¹¹	4. Staff willingness to use teledentistry technology?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The provider's physical space and background when conducting a virtual visit should be free of distractions and functional in terms of equipment availability and privacy, among other things. ^{12, 13, 14}	5. Designating a space for virtual patient visits that is uncluttered, private, and well lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
SECTION TOTAL (Count "Yes" responses)		_____		

Section 2: Patient Engagement

In Context	Has your practice considered...	Yes	No	Supporting Guidance
Patient preference for remote interactions with their dentist is increasing, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which shifted more care to be delivered virtually to mitigate spread of the disease. ^{15, 16}	1. Patient requests for teledentistry services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Difficulties accessing care prevents some patients from seeking in-person services, making teledentistry a good alternative in some cases. ^{17, 18}	2. Patient challenges accessing in-person care (e.g., transportation, work schedule, mobility)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patient communications about teledentistry should be tailored to patients' understanding and comfort with technology. ^{19, 20}	3. Approaches to informing patients about teledentistry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Social and cultural factors, such as age and language affect patient access to dental care. ^{21, 22}	4. Patient cultural views that can influence patients' decisions related to teledentistry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How teledentistry is delivered will influence the type of hardware, software, imaging, and internet access needed for patients to participate in a virtual visit. ²³	5. Devices and technology needed to support teledentistry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
SECTION TOTAL <i>(Count "Yes" responses)</i>		_____		

Understanding Your Results

Overall score ranges have the following meanings:

≤ 5 – The practice would benefit from increased awareness about how teledentistry will affect practice processes and patient care. Follow the linked Supporting Guidance arrows in the table to more information on topics not yet considered.

6-8 – Many factors associated with adopting teledentistry have been considered; however, additional awareness building is recommended. Supporting Guidance identified in the table and will help increase practice readiness to adopt teledentistry.

9-10 – The practice is well positioned to implement teledentistry. Supporting Guidance available in the table will strengthen practice awareness of teledentistry adoption.



Questions?

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