

A Social Work Guide to Telehealth in North Carolina

In North Carolina, 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

The North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board Statement on Technology Facilitated Services:
https://www.ncswboard.org/files/Position_Stmt_on_Tech_Facil_Services_Amended_2017.2.1.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-NC 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.

Medicaid & North Carolina Health Choice

North Carolina providers of telepsychiatry services are reimbursed as long as certain conditions are met. Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) are eligible telepsychiatry providers for certain services. Exceptions to reimbursement include: the recipient is located in a jail, detention center, prison; the provider is not an enrolled provider, or the provider does not follow established criteria for the service provided.

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.

Private Insurance

North Carolina does not have a telehealth parity law, meaning that the state does **not** legally require 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.

Useful Resources

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

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