

ADA Policy on TeleDentistry

TeleDentistry refers to the use of telehealth systems and methodologies in dentistry. Telehealth refers to a broad variety of technologies and tactics to deliver virtual medical, health, and education services. Telehealth is not a specific service, but a collection of means to enhance care and education delivery.

TeleDentistry includes patient care and education delivery using, but not limited to, the following modalities:

- Live video (synchronous): Live, two-way interaction between a person (patient, caregiver, or provider) and a provider using audiovisual telecommunications technology.
- Store-and-forward (asynchronous): Transmission of recorded health information (for example, radiographs, photographs, video, digital impressions and photomicrographs of patients) through a secure electronic communications system to a practitioner, who uses the information to evaluate a patient's condition or render a service outside of a real-time or live interaction.
- Remote patient monitoring (RPM): Personal health and medical data collection from an individual in one location via electronic communication technologies, which is transmitted to a provider (sometimes via a data processing service) in a different location for use in care and related support of care.
- Mobile health (mHealth): Health care and public health practice and education supported by mobile communication devices such as cell phones, tablet computers, and personal digital assistants (PDA).

General Considerations: The treatment of patients who receive services via TeleDentistry must be properly documented and should include providing the patient with a summary of services. Dentists who deliver services using TeleDentistry must establish protocols for appropriate referrals when necessary.

Patients' Rights: Dental patients whose care are rendered or coordinated using TeleDentistry modalities have the right to expect:

1. That any dentist delivering services using TeleDentistry technologies will be licensed in the state where the patient receives services, or be providing these services as otherwise authorized by that state's dental board.
2. Access to the licensure and board certification qualifications of the oral health care practitioner who is providing the care in advance of the visit.
3. That the delivery of services through TeleDentistry technologies will follow evidence-based practice guidelines, to the degree they are available, as a means of ensuring patient safety, quality of care and positive health outcomes.
4. That they will be informed about the identity of the providers collecting or evaluating their information or providing treatment, and of any costs they will be responsible for in advance of the delivery of services.
5. That relevant patient information will be collected prior to performing services using TeleDentistry technologies and methods including medical, dental, and social history, and other relevant demographic and personal information.
6. That the provision of services using TeleDentistry technologies will be properly documented and the records and documentation collected will be provided to the patient upon their request.
7. That services provided using TeleDentistry technologies and methods include care coordination as a part of a dental home and that the patient's records be made available to any entity that is serving as the patient's dental home.
8. That the patient will be actively involved in treatment decisions, will be able to choose how they receive a covered service, including considerations for urgency, convenience and satisfaction and without such penalties as higher deductibles, co-payments or coinsurance relative to that of in-person services.
9. That the delivery of services using TeleDentistry technologies are performed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations addressing the privacy and security of patients' private health information.

Quality of Care: The dentist is responsible for, and retains the authority for ensuring, the safety and quality of services provided to patients using TeleDentistry technologies and methods. Services delivered via TeleDentistry should be consistent with in-person services, and the delivery of services utilizing these modalities must abide by laws addressing privacy and security of a patient's dental/medical information.

Supervision of Allied Dental Personnel: The extent of the supervision of allied dental personnel should conform to the applicable dental practice act in the state where the patient receives services and where the dentist is licensed. The dentist should be knowledgeable regarding the competence and qualifications of the allied personnel utilized, and should have the capability of immediately contacting both the allied dental personnel providing service and the patient receiving services. All services delivered by allied dental personnel should be consistent with the ADA Comprehensive Statement on Allied Dental Personnel.

Licensure: Dentists and allied dental personnel who deliver services through TeleDentistry modalities must be licensed or credentialed in accordance with the laws of the state in which the patient receives service. The delivery of services via TeleDentistry must comply with the state's scope of practice laws, regulations or rules. The American Dental Association opposes a single national federalized system of dental licensure for the purposes of TeleDentistry.

Reimbursement: Dental benefit plans and all other third-party payers, in both public (e.g. Medicaid) and private programs, shall provide coverage for services using TeleDentistry technologies and methods (synchronous or asynchronous) delivered to a covered person to the same extent that the services would be covered if they were provided through in-person encounters. Coverage for services delivered via TeleDentistry modalities will be at the same levels as those provided for services provided through in-person encounters and not be limited or restricted based on the technology used or the location of either the patient or the provider as long as the health care provider is licensed in the state where the patient receives service.

Technical Considerations: Dentists are encouraged to consider conformance with applicable data exchange standards to facilitate delivery of services via TeleDentistry modalities. These include, but are not limited to, Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM) standards when selecting and using imaging systems, X12/HL7 for the exchange of information and ICD-9/10-CM/SNOMED/SNODENT for documentation consistency.