



Telehealth Visits with a Patient Who Has an Intellectual or Developmental Disability (I/DD)

As telehealth becomes a regular part of health care, providers may find that their approach needs to vary depending on the patient's needs. When caring for a patient with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD), a few additional steps can help ensure the visit is effective and comfortable. While these recommendations are designed for patients with I/DD, they can benefit all patients participating in telehealth.

1 Assess the Patient's Interest in Telehealth

Determine whether your patient is interested in using telehealth services.

For some individuals, transportation or other barriers make in-person visits difficult, and telehealth can help reduce stress and improve access to care. Ask whether they have preferences on types of telehealth to use for their services, for instance if they may feel more comfortable communicating via telephone or messaging, and if those technologies are available.

2 Allow Extra Time

Telehealth visits—especially the first one—may take longer for patients with I/DD.

The format is new for many, and it may take time for the patient to adjust to interacting through technology. Be prepared to allow extra time for the patient to understand questions and formulate responses.

3 Review the Patient's Technology Setup

Discuss the patient's available technology before the visit to confirm that it is suitable and that the patient feels comfortable using it. Consider asking:

- ✓ Do you have a camera on your computer, tablet, or smartphone?
- ✓ Are you comfortable turning the camera and microphone on and off?
- ✓ Would you benefit from using a headset to improve sound quality? Built-in microphones or speakers may not always be clear enough.
- ✓ Is your internet connection reliable? If the patient is unsure, ask if they experience interruptions when watching videos online. Their response can help determine if a video visit is appropriate.

4 Schedule a Test Call

If possible, conduct a brief test call prior to the first telehealth visit. This allows the provider to confirm that the patient's technology setup works properly and gives the patient an opportunity to practice using the system, ask questions, and gain confidence with the process.

5 Ask About a Support Person Joining the Visit

Ask whether the patient would like someone to be present during the telehealth appointment, such as a family member, friend, or caregiver. Some patients may not realize that they can have another person join the visit. A support person can also assist with technical needs, such as adjusting the camera, if necessary.

6 Simplify the Process for Joining the Visit

Reduce the number of steps required to join the telehealth session whenever possible.

If the platform requires authentication or login, ensure that the patient has sufficient time to complete the process before any expiration period ends. Providing simpler access reduces anxiety and technical difficulties.

7 Provide Clear Step-by-Step Instructions

Send detailed written instructions that describe each step of joining the telehealth visit.

Include screenshots or visuals showing what the patient will see at each stage (for example, entering a password or waiting in a virtual waiting room).

Also explain what the patient should do if they see an unexpected screen or if the connection fails, such as calling a specific phone number for assistance.

8 Ask Clear, Focused Questions

Avoid broad or open-ended questions, which can be overwhelming for some patients.

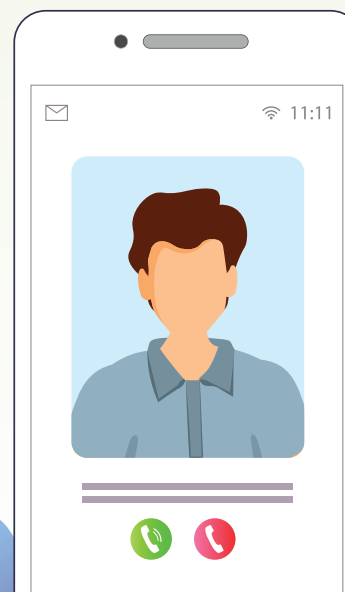
Ask direct and specific questions to ensure clear communication.

For example, instead of asking, "Do you have any questions?" ask, "Do you have any questions about your medication?"

9 Provide a Summary or Transcript

Let patients know if they will receive a summary of their visit or if your telehealth platform offers a transcript feature that allows them to download a copy.

A summary or transcript helps patients remember important instructions and details from their appointment.



Please take this quick survey to provide your feedback on this material and suggestions regarding what other telehealth educational materials should be developed for the intellectually or developmentally disabled community.

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For more information please visit www.cchpca.org or email info@cchpca.org