



# Using Telehealth to Treat Patients with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)

Some providers may feel unsure about using telehealth with patients who have intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD). Telehealth can be different from in-person care, but with the right approach, it can work well. The ideas below can help support telehealth for patients with I/DD—and improve visits for all patients.

## Talk About Telehealth as an Option

- ⌚ If a service can be done safely and effectively by telehealth, let the patient or their caregiver know.
- ⌚ Explain the different types of telehealth, such as video, phone calls, or secure messages.
- ⌚ The patient (or caregiver) should make the final choice, as long as the option is safe and appropriate.
- ⌚ If the patient or caregiver asks about telehealth, discuss both the benefits and drawbacks.
- ⌚ Describe what happens during a telehealth visit, especially if you think an in-person visit might be better for that service.



## Things to Keep in Mind for Patients with I/DD

### ✓ Allow extra time.

Telehealth visits may take longer. Patients might need more time to answer questions, share information, or use the technology. Plan for extra time in the schedule.

### ✓ Use helpful tools.

- ⌚ Make sure your telehealth system includes tools that support accessibility—such as closed captioning, chat, or screen sharing.
- ⌚ Let patients know these tools are available and explain how to use them.

### ✓ Be flexible.

- ⌚ Every patient is different. Telehealth may work well for some people or types of visits, but not others.
- ⌚ For example, one patient might move the camera easily, while another might need help.





### ✓ **Ask about having another person present.**

- ⌚ Some patients may not know they can invite someone to join their telehealth visit.
- ⌚ Ask if they'd like a caregiver, family member, or support person to take part. Someone else can join the visit to also help adjust the camera or support communication.

### ✓ **Review what to do if something goes wrong.**

- ⌚ At the start of the visit, remind the patient what to do if they lose connection or have technical problems.
- ⌚ Give them a phone number to call or explain that your office will call them back.

### ✓ **Share visit summaries.**

- ⌚ Tell patients how and when they'll get a written summary of the visit.
- ⌚ Written notes or transcripts help patients remember what was discussed.
- ⌚ If your telehealth platform allows patients to download a transcript, explain how they can do that.

## **Consent for Telehealth Services**

Some states require patients to give consent before receiving telehealth services. Even if your state does not require it by law, some insurance plans may. Be aware of whether verbal or written consent is acceptable under applicable rules. If verbal consent is allowed, it usually must be documented in the patient's record.

When asking a patient with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD), or their caregiver, to sign a written consent form before a telehealth visit, keep these tips in mind:



### ✓ **Ask for consent ahead of time.**

Do not wait until the day of the visit to request consent. Some laws or insurance policies may prohibit last-minute consent. Patients and caregivers may also need extra time to read, understand, and decide. Many providers also ask patients to confirm their location at the time of the visit to meet licensing requirements.

### ✓ **Use plain language and accessible formats.**

Make sure the consent form is easy to read and understand. Provide it in a format that works for the patient—for example, large print, Braille, or another language.

### ✓ **Offer visual or audio explanations.**

Some people with I/DD understand information better when it is shown visually or explained verbally. If possible, create a short video that explains the consent form in simple terms.

### ✓ **Explain the right to change their mind.**

Make it clear, both on the form and in conversation, that patients can refuse or stop telehealth at any time, even after signing the consent form.

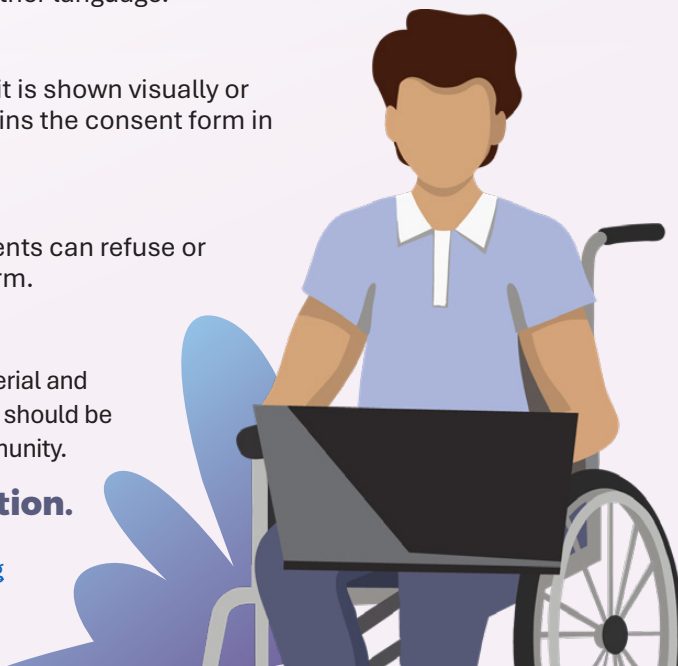


Please take this quick survey to provide your feedback on this material and suggestions regarding what other telehealth educational materials should be developed for the intellectually or developmentally disabled community.

## **This resource was supported by the WITH Foundation.**

Created by the Center for Connected Health Policy.

For more information please visit [www.cchpca.org](http://www.cchpca.org) or email [info@cchpca.org](mailto:info@cchpca.org)





# Connecting to a Telehealth Visit

## Preparing for a Video Telehealth Visit



**Patients and caregivers should receive clear, step-by-step instructions for joining a video telehealth visit. The exact steps may vary depending on the platform you use, but detailed instructions can help:**

- ✓ **Reduce confusion.** Patients and caregivers will know what to do and when.
- ✓ **Prevent delays or miscommunication.** If a patient has trouble logging in, the provider can quickly identify it as a technical issue, not a missed appointment.
- ✓ **Improve the experience.** A smooth connection makes the visit more comfortable and productive for everyone.
- ✓ **Make use of helpful tools.** Inform patients about features like closed captioning, chat, or other platform-specific options.

### PROVIDE THESE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE THE VISIT

so patients and caregivers have time to review them and ask questions. If possible, schedule a practice session before the actual appointment.



**During the practice session, a staff member can:**

- ✓ Walk the patient through the steps,
- ✓ Answer questions, and
- ✓ Troubleshoot technical problems.



**This session also lets you check the patient's setup for telehealth:**

- ✓ Is the internet connection strong enough?
- ✓ Can both the patient and provider see and hear each other clearly?



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# Example Template:



CCHP



WITH

You can use or adapt the sample instruction template below for your platform. Even if your system doesn't include every step listed, customize it to match your telehealth process.

Hello,

Your telehealth appointment with *(provider's name)* is scheduled for *(appointment time)*.

**To join your appointment, click this link:**

➔ <https://www.telehealthvisit.com/patient781>

This link is **just for this visit only**. Please use only this link to connect to your appointment.

When you click on the link, you'll be taken to your **virtual visit room** for your telehealth appointment.

**It will look like this:** *(insert screenshot or image of the telehealth waiting room here)*



## TELEHEALTH WAITING ROOM

Your Appointment Will Start Soon

After you click the link, you will see a message or screen that says you are in your **virtual waiting room**.

Just wait here until *(your provider's name)* joins the room and starts your appointment.

If you run into any trouble connecting or during your telehealth visit, please call *(800-555-1111)* for help.

*(If your system requires patients to take more steps to enter the telehealth visit room, include explicit instructions and a picture or screenshot showing what the patient will see on their screen.)*

*For example, if the patient needs to type in their name to enter, include an image showing where to enter their name.)*

## WELCOME TO YOUR TELEHEALTH VISIT

Please Type Your Name Into The Box Below

*(Additionally, if your system requires two-step authentication, ensure this has been explained to the patient in advance, and the patient will have enough time to retrieve and enter that information before the time expires.)*