

NEQCA Offering Assistance With Telehealth:

Interim Solutions Available

March 19, 2020

NEQCA is committed to assisting Network practices with establishing a means for conducting billable telehealth patient visits during the COVID-19 national emergency. In coordination with Tufts Medical Center and Wellforce, we are working with American Well to provide our practices with a platform to assist you in offering secure two-way telehealth visits with your patients. Interested providers will receive training and support to successfully conduct these virtual visits with their patients. There is no cost for the American Well platform in the foreseeable future as practices navigate the impact of COVID-19. As a provider for the American Well Platform, you may use an iPhone or a desktop, laptop, or other device with a webcam.

You may soon receive an outreach call from a member of the NEQCA Performance Team, but in the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact your NEQCA Account Manager.

Interim Solutions Include FaceTime, Skype

Meanwhile, if you are looking for a temporary solution to provide billable telehealth visits with your patients, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced in a March 17, 2020 [notice](#) that during the COVID-19 national emergency, health care providers are now **permitted** to use popular applications that allow for video chats, including:

- Apple FaceTime
- Skype
- Facebook Messenger video chat
- Google Hangouts video

Under the notice, covered health care providers may use these popular applications to provide telehealth visits without risk that OCR might seek to impose a penalty for noncompliance with the HIPAA Rules related to the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. Providers are encouraged to notify patients that these third-party applications potentially introduce privacy risks, and providers should enable all available encryption and privacy modes when using such applications. Chart documentation should include a statement that the service was provided through telehealth.

Public Facing Apps Should Not Be Used

Under the OCR notice, however, Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok, and similar video communication applications are public facing, and **should not be used** in the provision of telehealth by covered health care providers.

Additional information on documentation and billing is provided separately.

All of us at NEQCA thank for all you are doing to help our patients.