



Pledge of Support for Age-Inclusive Telehealth Practices



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Despite tremendous challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, providers showed their commitment to caring for older adults by innovating and increasingly using telehealth as a tool to safely connect with, and care for, older adults. We applaud this use of telehealth and the commitment providers have shown to older adults.

As the public health emergency comes to an end, providers now have time to assess their telehealth programs to ensure that telehealth is delivered in a manner that is age-inclusive in that it accounts for older adults' unique needs. "Age-inclusive telehealth" is defined by the following core principles: care should be equitable and accessible, person-centered, and integrated and coordinated across people and systems. Delivering age-inclusive telehealth is not only the right thing to do for older adults, but it also improves outcomes such as enabling easier access to care, reduced wait times, lower cancellation rates, reduced potentially avoidable hospitalizations, improved provider efficiency, enhanced communication with caregivers and patients, and facilitated health outreach and education.

The Collaborative for Telehealth and Aging, which was convened by West Health Institute, the University of

Virginia, and the Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center, is a group of over 40 experts, representing more than 30 organizations dedicated to caring and advocating for older adults. Collaborative members endorsed the core principles of age-inclusive telehealth and developed [18 provider-focused guidelines](#) designed to help providers deliver telehealth to older adults in ways that are consistent with these principles. To support age-inclusive telehealth delivery, the Collaborative partners also launched the [Center of Excellence For Telehealth and Aging](#), which provides free, practical tools, extensive, vetted resources, and a community of like-minded experts to help organizations enhance their telehealth offerings and showcase their achievements in improving telehealth care for older adults.

If you also believe in these principles for delivering age-inclusive telehealth, please show others by signing this pledge letter. Signing this pledge demonstrates your public commitment to providing telehealth services that are guided by the principles of equity and accessibility, person-centeredness, and integration and coordination of people and systems for older adults inside your organization.

By making this pledge, you will become one of the industry's leaders demonstrating the high value you place on the care of older adults, and showing your leadership in helping define what high-quality technology-enabled care for older adults should look like.

By signing below, ... [insert organization name], pledges its commitment to delivering age-inclusive telehealth to the best of its ability.

Signed: Date:

Print Name: Title:

APPENDIX

Benefits of becoming a leader in age-inclusive telehealth

- National designation as a “leader in age-inclusive telehealth”. Providing recognition as a national, regional, and local champion for age-inclusive telehealth.
- The opportunity to join a growing community of leaders and organizations that can shape the narrative, goals, and future of age-inclusive telehealth.
- Access to expertise and tools via the [Center of Excellence For Telehealth and Aging](#) to help ensure that your organization can maximize the value and return on its investment in telehealth.
- The opportunity to differentiate your organization through its affiliation with the other pledging leaders via the [West Health Institute](#) and the [Center of Excellence For Telehealth and Aging](#) websites and social media, mainstream media, and publications, if desired.
- Support in highlighting and sharing your successes to demonstrate your leadership in this important area.





Amidst lockdowns and office closures in 2020, providers turned to telehealth to provide care to older adults. However, many telehealth programs were created rapidly and without resources and guidelines to address and serve the unique needs of older adults well. In 2021, West Health Institute created the Collaborative for Telehealth and Aging (C4TA), in part, to develop a set of comprehensive, provider-focused recommendations for delivering care via telehealth to older adults. C4TA is a unique and robust group of subject matter experts including geriatricians, experienced telehealth providers, health system administrators, and older adult and patient advocates. C4TA's recommended principles and guidelines to providing telehealth highlight older adults' needs and create a roadmap for providers and health systems to take actionable steps to meet those needs.

PRINCIPLE 1

Person-Centered Care

The older adult being served is at the center of all decision-making. The older adult's care preferences, goals, wishes, abilities, support system, and conditions are accounted for.

Person-Centered Care Guidelines:

Person-centered telehealth...

1. Accounts for older adults' healthcare goals, care preferences, and 'what matters'
2. Promotes high-value use cases that drive older-adult-focused goals, incorporating payer and provider perspectives
3. Supports coordination and continuity of care
4. Ensures that older adults and their caregivers are prepared and understand what to expect from a telehealth encounter
5. Promotes opportunities to use telehealth to increase access to care while reducing avoidable costs
6. Reduces time to access providers across healthcare settings
7. Incorporates older adults' family and caregivers when appropriate and consistent with the older adults' wishes

PRINCIPLE 2

Equitable and Accessible Care

Everyone should have equal access to the same level of high-quality care, regardless of age, ability, socio-economic status, health and technology literacy, or rural, suburban or urban locations.

Equitable and Accessible Care Guidelines:

Equitable and accessible telehealth...

1. Accounts for older adults' physical and cognitive differences
2. Accounts for cultural and linguistic differences of older adults' and their caregivers
3. Accounts for technology literacy and readiness older adults' and their caregivers
4. Uses telehealth to address needs across all settings, including the home, as promptly as possible
5. Ensures that staff and providers engage in on-going education on best practices for using telehealth with older adults
6. Accounts for differences in access to technology and connectivity

PRINCIPLE 3

Integrated and Coordinated Care

Integrated and coordinated care should include active participation from patients, caregivers, and providers across the care continuum. Systems should be set up to facilitate access to the information and support necessary to provide quality care to older adults.

Integrated and Coordinated Care Guidelines:

Integrated and coordinated telehealth...

1. Facilitates telehealth providers have access to older adults' health history
2. Facilitates safe, coordinated transitions of care
3. Integrates into the care continuum / provider practice
4. Connects crucial stakeholders throughout the entire process
5. Supports staff working at the top of their licenses to drive efficiency



bit.ly/Principles-Guidelines

In partnership with:

