Over the past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has imperiled our country and the world. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), public health agencies, and a number of industry associations have recognized telemedicine – the practice of using technology to deliver healthcare remotely – as a means to prevent a surge, allow patients access to care, and minimize exposure.

In the midst of a pandemic, telemedicine can be a compelling option for triaging, screening, and assessing symptomatic at-risk patients. It can also be an efficient way to manage a patient following a confirmed diagnosis. While telemedicine offers many benefits, the nontraditional mode of delivery can expose the practitioner and an organization to liability. Healthcare practitioners and organizations must be careful to develop and implement a telemedicine program that not only provides quality care, but also minimizes risk to patient and practitioner.

The American Medical Association and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have developed toolkits to help providers and organizations implement this mode of access to healthcare.

Consider the following when planning, developing, and implementing a telemedicine program:

- **Understand State Laws and Licensure Requirements**-Consultation with an attorney is essential as state and federal telemedicine laws and licensing requirements vary and continue to evolve.
- **Telemedicine Training**-Provide training on the use of the technology and equipment, including limitations of virtual visits (e.g. audio, visual, service interruptions and when to direct the patient to an in-person visit/care) and camera/visual presence. Some organizations that offer training in virtual telemedicine services include: The American Telemedicine Association and The American Medical Association.
- **Privacy and Security**-Assure that privacy and security measures are in place when considering/using a telemedicine platform.
- **Consent**-Oral and written informed consent is advised when providing remote care. The American Telemedicine Association offers sample telemedicine consent forms.
- **Documentation**-Document virtual patient encounters at least as thoroughly as any other encounter, and observe all medical and legal standards of care. The American Telemedicine Association offers sample documentation tools.

Although there is little debate about the value of virtual telemedicine visits to healthcare organizations, practitioners, and the patient community, taking a step back to consider key areas of potential exposure is essential to mitigate risk.

For more information and resources on telemedicine visit:

- The American Telemedicine Association ([www.americantelemed.org](http://www.americantelemed.org))
- The American Hospital Association ([www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org))
- The American Medical Association ([www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org))
- American Society For Health Care Risk Management ([www.ashrm.org](http://www.ashrm.org))
- Federation of State Medical Boards ([www.fsmb.org](http://www.fsmb.org))
- Center for Connected Health Policy ([www.cchpca.org](http://www.cchpca.org))
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ([www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov))