

A Strategic Roadmap for Advancing Telehealth in Colorado

Ed Bostick, Executive Director Colorado Telehealth Network

Colorado's health care providers are finding themselves at varying degrees of readiness regarding the integration of primary care and behavioral health services. Telehealth is a tool that can support this shift; however, there is no one-size-fits-all telehealth solution for Colorado.

Recognizing these concerns, the Colorado Telehealth Working Group (CTWG) convenes a monthly meeting to discuss issues that may result in barriers to the adoption of telehealth or its implementation. The members of CTWG are voluntary and represent a wide stakeholder group comprised of behavioral and physical health organizations, hospitals, health systems, the State of Colorado, payers, insurance plans and consumers.

Since its creation, CTWG has:

- Worked with stakeholders to educate decision makers on benefits of telehealth parity/reimbursement in support of HB15-1029
- Informed and educated the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies about provider patient encounters utilizing telehealth
- Hosted the Colorado Telehealth Mini-Summit in 2015 and the 2016 Colorado Telehealth Consensus Conference

Colorado Telehealth Mini-Summit Summary

CTWG hosted a mini-summit in October 2015 to begin identifying and addressing barriers to telehealth adoption and implementation in Colorado. Fifty-one individuals attended the mini-summit, representing 37 distinct organizations operating in Colorado.

Attendees were organized into five breakout sessions examining how telehealth impacts the following areas:

- Integration of physical and behavioral health
- Policy and payment reform
- Clinical outlook and vision
- Operational outlook and vision
- Telehealth innovation

A follow-up consensus conference to identify implementation strategies for the development of telehealth service lines was held February, 2016. This paper identifies principles for the formation of a roadmap to telehealth for Colorado health care organizations. Eighty-six individuals representing 55 organizations in Colorado and Wyoming participated in the conference.

Participants reviewed two use cases for the day's discussion. Use Case One focused on integrated care in a clinical setting. Use Case Two related to telehealth delivered in the patient's home.

Eight barriers to telehealth were identified by the group:

1. Lack of integration of physical and behavioral health
2. Lack of incentives apart from fee for service for payment and reimbursement for telehealth delivery
3. Interoperability
4. Provider liability
5. Education of telehealth users and general public
6. HIPAA compliance
7. Telehealth's effect on workflows
8. Return on investment (ROI)

Recommended solutions to identified barriers for patients and providers using telehealth fell into five categories across both use cases in response to the eight identified barriers to telehealth.

1 Adopt Guiding Principles

Target:

Health care providers and telehealth decision makers at sites, facilities and systems

Educational objectives:

- Consult existing codes of ethics and standard operating procedures to achieve consistent service provision through telehealth. For clinic and home settings; Adhere to rules, regulations and protocols to identify and protect against fraud, waste and abuse.
- Outline best practices and regularly update those practices based on new evidence.
- Review state and federal level regulations that may pose a barrier to the expansion of telehealth and identify opportunities to address those barriers.

2 Educate Patients and Providers on Telehealth Encounter

Target:

Health care providers, patients and clinical telehealth users (non-providers)

Educational objectives:

- Create resource repository on available telehealth services and providers who offer telehealth.
- Provide information and education for telehealth best practices regarding the patient encounter to providers.
- Identify telehealth competencies for providers – such as *when* it is appropriate to use telehealth modalities and *how* to use telehealth both in the clinic and in the home.
- Increase telehealth literacy to drive consumer demand for telehealth.
- Establish provider learning communities and cohorts to validate and spread best practices in telehealth implementation.

3 Encourage Standards for Interoperability and HIPAA Compliance

Target:

Telehealth software and equipment developers, broadband service providers, hardware and peripheral manufacturers

Educational objectives:

- Adapt to changes in technology, software and connectivity.
- Integrate into the electronic health record and mobile applications used by patients.
- Standardize interoperability with other products/systems.
- Comply with privacy and security standards.
- Allow for special accommodations for providers and patients.
- Allow users to obtain timely, meaningful information.

4 Adopt Customizable Workflows and Business Plans for Telehealth Service Lines

Target:

Payers, policy makers, health care providers and telehealth decision makers

Educational objectives:

- Develop template workflows for implementation and operation of telehealth visits tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of the provider and patient.
- Accommodate current workflows as much as possible.
- Create strategic partnerships to support appropriate care.
- Identify incentives to the use of telehealth across providers, patients, payers and hospitals that consider the financial, psychological/emotional, legal and social needs of the patient.
- Account for funding and outcome-based return on investment measurement.
- Consider building into the capitated rate payment for behavioral and physical health providers to deliver telehealth services.
- Expand the capability of health care organizations to function in a managed care environment.
- Make available information to help providers bill appropriately for telehealth services.
- Create repeatable, sustainable, scalable business templates that support care coordination.
- Revise the SIM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the multi-payer collaborative to include language committing to the adoption of alternative payment methodologies linked to clinical quality metrics.

5 Monitor, Measure and Disseminate Impact on Telehealth

Target:

Health care providers and telehealth decision makers

Educational objectives:

- Identify desired clinical outcomes in advance.
- Measure impact of telehealth on quality of care and cost reduction.
- Measure usage of telehealth tools.
- Measure patient and provider satisfaction relating to telehealth encounter.
- Continuous monitoring and measurement of the impact of telehealth on quality of care and cost reduction through the dissemination of best practices, success stories and lessons learned.

The Colorado Telehealth Network (CTN) provides broadband connections for Colorado's health care delivery systems. CTN is committed to achieving fully integrated health care communities by providing a dedicated, secured network with essential connection capabilities for health care data, medical images, electronic health records and more.

Colorado Telehealth Network has been a member of NCHN (National Cooperative of Health Networks) since 2014.