

FAQs from FSBPT *Telehealth in Physical Therapy* Resource Paper

What defines Digital Practice versus Telehealth?

Digital practice is a term used to describe healthcare services, support, and information provided remotely via digital communication and devices. The term digital practice encompasses the term telehealth and is more representative of the variety of virtual tools augmenting physical therapy practice, including wearable technology, artificial intelligence, platforms, and apps. However, most regulatory language still uses telehealth, telerehabilitation, and/or telemedicine as the term of art.

Is Telehealth a new way to deliver Physical Therapy?

Physical Therapy delivered via telehealth is not a new treatment nor is it an expansion of the scope of practice. Rather, telehealth is a mode of delivering skilled physical therapy care to those in need. The PT retains responsibility for the care of the patient/client and for determining the best means to deliver that care. Standards of care and practice, laws, and regulations currently required to be followed for any in-person encounter must also be followed for any encounter via telehealth.

Who is responsible to decide if Telehealth should be performed with a Patient/Client?

The physical therapy provider, whether virtual or in person, is responsible for making sure the appropriate care can be delivered without in-person interaction. Prior to the utilization of telehealth as a mode of delivering physical therapy, all safety procedures and assessment of the appropriateness should be considered.

What Language about Telehealth scope of practice should be considered in State statute?

Scope of practice and standards of practice remain unchanged whether in person or remote, maintenance of confidentiality, clearly communicating by what means the provider is authorized to legally practice/work in the jurisdiction (compact privilege, license, registry), and documentation (and possibly justification) that remote care is appropriate and potentially effective for the patient/client.

Can a patient continue care with their physical therapist/physical therapist assistant if the therapist moves out of state/jurisdiction?

It depends. Many jurisdictions have enacted statutes which facilitate telehealth through improved licensure portability by creating alternatives to traditional licensure pathways such as telehealth registries, universal licensure, and multi-state licensure compacts.

A complaint from a patient/client was made regarding a change in plan of care resulting in additional billing. What steps can the Board take to resolve this issue?

Informed consent, at a minimum, occurs at the onset of physical therapy care and is updated when there are changes/modifications to the treatment of the plan of care. Standards of care and practice, laws, and regulations currently required to be followed for any in-person encounter must also be followed for any encounter via telehealth.

When does the actual client/therapist relationship begin in regard to telehealth regulations?



Though it may sometimes be difficult to determine the precise moment the relationship is established, the definition in the FSBPT Model Practice Act states the relationship is, “established once the [provider] assumes or undertakes the care or treatment of a patient/client.”

How does PTA supervision under telehealth differ from PTA supervision in person?

The Model Practice Act states that a PT may provide supervision while either onsite or virtual. The same standard of care, professional standards and supervision applies to telehealth services as in-person services.

What are the federal and state legal requirements of personal health information privacy and compliance of telehealth visits?

HIPPA, HITECH, ACA, and state privacy, confidentiality, security and medical record retention rules. Sufficient security measures must be in place and the physical therapy providers and staff should be aware of the requirements for privacy and confidentiality associated with telehealth services at both the clinic/hospital or remote site(s).

What procedures must the provider have in place in case of a patient emergency?

At the onset of each telehealth visit:

- patient/client location (it is important to know the physical location of the patient in case of An emergency)
- alternate methods of communication in case of technical difficulties
- the ability to safely receive physical therapy services where the patient is located
- proper functioning of technology
- understanding of emergency procedures

