

## Wyoming Telehealth Network

### September 2021 WyTN Spotlight (Opinion Editorial)

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The Wyoming Telehealth Network joined the forces with the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) as an endorsing partner, to promote the first ever Telehealth Awareness Week™ - September 19-25, 2021. We are highlighting and reinforcing the central role that telehealth now plays in the delivery of healthcare services. Dr. JJ Chen of Cheyenne helped promote this week by submitting this opinion editorial to newspapers statewide with great success. You can read more [here](#).

The first annual Telehealth Awareness Week is Sept. 19-25, 2021. This week will showcase the central role that telehealth now plays in the delivery of healthcare services.

The pandemic has highlighted ways to expand quality virtual care. It has created new opportunities for patients and clients to connect with providers in a way they prefer. This enables access to care when and where is it needed most.

Finding specialized healthcare providers is hard. Navigating the distance between rural communities in need can be challenging. Telehealth is a tool that can help lessen these barriers and challenges.

So how can you and your provider benefit from telehealth in an ever-changing landscape of healthcare?

## Tips for patients

Like any healthcare, telehealth is primarily about the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients. Often, patients must drive long distances or endure long waits for specialty appointments. In-person visits can create further hardships for people with disabilities. Telehealth appointments can offer improved access for more people in rural and underserved areas. It can ease hardships.

Plus, there is evidence that telehealth appointments are just as effective as face-to-face appointments in most cases. The Wyoming Telehealth Network can help you understand how to get started.

First, confirm with your provider that they offer telehealth services. If they do, determine if telehealth is a good fit for your appointment. If needed, and if your provider is licensed in Wyoming, they can access a free telehealth platform. The Wyoming Telehealth Network offers free HIPAA-secured licenses. Providers can get started at [wyomingtelehealth.org](http://wyomingtelehealth.org).

Next, you will need access to a smart phone, tablet or computer that is connected to the internet. If this is a barrier for you, there are some programs that can help. The Emergency Broadband Benefit is designed to help households and families afford internet service during the pandemic. Not all of Wyoming's communities have access to high-speed internet. This barrier is being addressed at the state and national level.

Your provider's office will support you with all the necessary steps to get set up for a successful telehealth appointment. Make sure you are in a well-lit, private area with little to no background noise. This will help your appointment be as close to a face-to-face appointment as possible.

## Help for healthcare organizations

Telehealth usage skyrocketed during the pandemic. We must think about telehealth as a permanent, integrated care delivery system.

Licensure restrictions have been eased. Healthcare providers are now allowed enhanced reimbursement for many new telehealth services. These moves removed some barriers to the expansion of virtual care. It also allowed more access to healthcare for more people.

Telehealth brings specialty care and other services to rural and underserved areas. These areas experience severe practitioner shortages. Additionally, wait time for appointments can be long. Telehealth can help with these issues and more.

Telehealth is not always about one practitioner seeing one patient. It can bolster team care by bringing together multiple stakeholders in real time. Stakeholders can include any combination of nurses, therapists, general practitioners, specialists, care coordinators, social workers, family members, interpreters, and others depending upon a patient's need.

Expanding population health and wellness through mobile and desktop applications is important. These are ways that further expanded telehealth can benefit patient care now and in the future. Furthermore, remote monitoring tools are transforming the post-hospital discharge and care experience, especially for people with chronic conditions. This is critical for the aging population. Remote patient monitoring devices, such as glucose and heart monitors, can help providers shift chronic care to the home. This saves patients and the state money and time.

All these services are dependent on the people who provide them. With telehealth, both patient and provider hold the keys to success. Telehealth visits are only as good as the skills and vision of the people who utilize it.

The Wyoming Telehealth Network can assist providers and patients in all stages of the telehealth journey, whether you are a patient setting up your first telehealth appointment or a provider needing help with anything from implementation to sustaining your program. We support healthcare entities, providers, and specialists to increase access to care. We strive to improve health outcomes for Wyoming residents. We do this through professional development, collaboration, and leveraging of telecommunications technology.

During Telehealth Awareness Week, take the time to learn more about what telehealth can do for you. Visit us at [wyomingtelehealth.org](http://wyomingtelehealth.org) for more information.