

Telehealth Etiquette Fact Sheet

Providers will use this job aid to professionally engage participants according to AbleTo expectations regarding telehealth etiquette. The following key concepts will be addressed: timeliness, professional appearance, professional workspace, and participant engagement.

AbleTo's Telehealth Etiquette Expectations

Timeliness

Your sessions should start on time, and any delays or changes communicated to the participant (and your team members) well in advance.

- You should ALWAYS start on time. One of the reasons a person may choose tele-health over an office visit is that they do not wish to spend time sitting in a waiting room. They also do not want to spend time waiting in front of a computer.
 - You should always arrive to the session before your participant.
 - It is a good practice to set up session reminders through email, text, or your calendar to notify you in advance of a scheduled session.
 - Your participants expect the same level of professionalism with AbleTo as they would receive in an office setting. Check your email and calendar DAILY so that you are aware of your schedule and any changes.
- If you are going to be late for a session, call the participant in advance and let them know when you will start the session.
- If you are unable to call or contact the participant, ask your Program Advisor (PA) for assistance or call the AbleTo Service Center at (866) 287-1802.
- Call the PA and let them know that your session started late and what was communicated with the participant.

Professional Appearance

Sessions should be held from a professional, confidential, private, and secure setting without distractions. This is true for sessions held over the computer and over the phone.



Telehealth Etiquette Fact Sheet

- When conducting video sessions, please ensure you are well groomed and dressed appropriately, just as you would in an office setting.
 - Check how you appear in the video prior to starting the session.
 - Lounge wear, sleepwear, or exercise attire does not project professionalism and should not be worn for video sessions.
 - Dress mindfully and in preparation for camera angles and lighting.

Professional Workspace

Sessions should be held from a professional, confidential, private, and secure setting without distractions. This is true for sessions held over the computer and over the phone.

Location

- The space should be free from noise, be clean, and uncluttered. Visually it should make the participant feel comfortable and secure and should not display personal items that could have the potential to negatively impact confidence in you as a telehealth provider.
- Whether using the computer or over the phone, you are expected to maintain the same level of patient confidentiality as you would in an office setting. You must practice HIPAA compliant levels of privacy and data security. You must vigilantly protect the participant's information. No one should be able to hear your sessions or view participant information.
- Other people, children or pets should never be present in the space during your sessions. This is a confidentiality issue as well as an inappropriate and unprofessional presentation. In addition, distractions can make participants feel that they do not have your full attention.
- During your session, it is best to position yourself at a desk or table with a nondescript background. Sessions should never be held where a personal space can be identified. For example, a bed, shoe closet or kitchen appliances should not be visible to the participant.
- Some states require that a provider's credentials are displayed in the professional setting. It is your responsibility to know and abide by your state's requirements.



Telehealth Etiquette Fact Sheet

Technology

- Your computer should be positioned on a hard surface, such as a desk or table, and not on your lap, the bed, or sofa. This will prevent the computer from moving during the session. Having the screen move around during the session appears uncontrolled and unprofessional.
- You should always be logged into EnAbleTo prior to session start time to review the protocol and previous notes and documentation, remaining logged in during session.
- Telephone sessions should be conducted in the same quiet, private and professional space as video sessions.
- If using a cell phone, make sure that it is adequately charged. Check the signal strength of the connection and service to make sure the call will not be dropped. It is a good idea to set the phone to do not disturb during your session so that other callers will not ring in during your call.
- It is required that providers have and use headphones during sessions. This is true for both computer held sessions and those held over the telephone. When using headphones, make sure that they are of sufficient quality to hear the participant clearly and for you to be clearly heard. Adjust the microphone in an optimal position prior to starting the session. This will prevent the distraction and noise of making adjustments during the session. If the microphone has an on and off button, or volume control practice using these features. Make sure that they are set appropriately prior to the session.
- Always test your equipment (phone, headphones, computer, etc.) and practice using it **PRIOR** to holding session to ensure there is no disruption during the session.

Participant Engagement

During tele-health sessions, you must have a heightened level of attentiveness during your sessions. The participant should be your absolute focus, without interruption. Tele-health is about the provider connection with the participant. You should make the participant feel that you have their best interest as your goal. During the discussion the participant must feel empowered and actively involved in the treatment program.



Telehealth Etiquette Fact Sheet

Professional Response

- Always confirm who you are speaking to and identify who you are before starting the session (telephone sessions).
- Do not assume that the participant wants you to call her/him by their first name, it is always best to ask for their preference.
- Practice active listening. This means giving your undivided attention to the participant, listening without interrupting, and paying attention to vocal and physical cues.
- Your interactions should center around the discussion with the participant and not your activity with the technology. Always respond in a patient and courteous manner that is encouraging and not demeaning. Do not attempt to engage in conversation while typing on the keyboard, this will make you seem distracted and disconnected.
- When you must type during the session (example: completing the IC), inform the participant that you will be completing the IC in the system, so that they are aware of why you are typing.

Eye Contact

- Eye contact is very important when session is being held via video-conferencing. Make sure you know where your computer camera is located and practice looking directly into it when speaking to the participant. This will make the participant feel like you are making eye contact with them.
- In an office setting it can be evident when you are taking notes, however, on the computer screen it may appear that you are not paying attention or that you are distracted. When you need to look away to make a note or document something on the screen, let the participant know what you are doing and initiate eye contact once you are done.
- Be sure not to simply stare at the camera but use nodding and other gestures, just as you would in a person-to-person session. This will keep the participant engaged. Remember that even when you are not talking you are still on camera. You should always control your facial expressions and tone. You want to be sure you are adequately and appropriately conveying what you mean.

Telehealth Etiquette Fact Sheet

Tone

- When speaking online or over the phone, your tone indicates to the participant how you are feeling. Your tone can indicate that you are tired, upset, irritated, or frustrated. It is important that your tone is pleasant and friendly.
- You may convey a harsh tone without being aware that you are doing so. Here are some steps you can take to decrease the likelihood that your tone will be misinterpreted as harsh:
 - Practice - Record your voice using a harsh tone, and then record your voice using a pleasant tone. Record the same phrases in both recordings. Make a note of the difference in your pitch and vocal melody. Do this often so that you are able to recognize when you are using a harsh tone.
 - Take a minute to breathe between sessions.
 - Start your session early and review notes and documentation so you are not rushed or unprepared.
 - Make it a priority to get adequate rest.
 - If you have missed a meal prior to a session, have a snack before starting your session.