

# GUIDE TO TELEHEALTH IN RURAL AMERICA

Rural patients often face challenges accessing healthcare. They tend to live far away from their doctors, making it difficult and costly to attend appointments. Telehealth services can change that, though; they make it easier and more convenient for rural patients to get the healthcare they need.

This guide explains best practices to create a telehealth business model to reach rural patients, so they can access healthcare in a way that's convenient and cost-effective, and your practice can keep and even add more patients.

## STEP 1 UNDERSTAND YOUR PATIENTS' NEEDS

Before implementing a telehealth business model meant to attract rural patients, assess how many rural patients you have. Second, understand what their needs are. The demographic isn't monolithic; while many of them might have smartphones, not everyone feels comfortable with video chat. Some would prefer talking on the phone.

## STEP 2 CHOOSE YOUR TECHNOLOGY

The next step is choosing the [right telehealth technology](#). You want a solution that:

- Enables a clear flow of communication between providers and patients.
- Allows for omnichannel access, so patients can call, text, email, or hold a video chat with a provider.
- Lets you seamlessly collaborate with other members of patients' healthcare teams.
- Is secure.
- Scales up as healthcare demand increases and is flexible enough to accommodate workflows.
- Is cost-effective in the short-term and the long-term.



## STEP 3 START PROMOTING YOUR TELEHEALTH SERVICES

If no one knows you offer telehealth services, no one will use them. Promote your telehealth services through social media, emails, fliers, and however else you can so that patients know these services exist.

## STEP 4 EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR TELEHEALTH SERVICES

Just because you offer telehealth services and people use them doesn't mean that things are going perfectly. Evaluating your telehealth services is crucial to ensure they're successful.

What's involved in this evaluation?

- Select benchmarks that you want to measure, such as how many people are using telehealth services, and what their satisfaction level is with those services.
- Next, find a way to measure those benchmarks, which might be through surveys or through tracking.
- Third, remember that evaluation isn't a one-and-done event; it's something you'll have to do periodically, so set a reasonable schedule (once every six months or once a year may be enough).

Offering telehealth services can help you reach out to your community in a way that's convenient and cost-effective for your patients, while still growing your revenues.

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