Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC) designed this Telehealth Coordinator Best Practice Guide to help your telehealth program grow and thrive. It was built around recommendations from telehealth coordinators who’ve seen success in their programs.

Helping our members, and the communities we serve, be healthy.
Telehealth is the way of delivering healthcare and public health services using information and communication technologies to enable diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and patient self-management from a distance to a healthcare provider.

The goal of PHC’s telehealth program is to improve both access to and quality of health services provided in rural and other medically underserved areas. Telehealth can help support medical treatment, be a convenient avenue for specialists in delivering specialty care, and allows patients the ability to virtually interact on a real-time basis with a specialist.

**Telehealth Objective:**

- Saves time and money with the decrease of travel time and gas expense for members
- Continuity of care
- Provides patients increased access to specialty care
- Earlier intervention
- Higher patient satisfaction due to decreased wait times for specialty appointments
- Improved quality of care by creating a patient-centered medical neighborhood
- A valuable tool for the delivery of specialty care services

**Telehealth Coordinator Best Practices:**

1. Assess and confirm your organization’s readiness for telehealth. Identify who will be a part of the telehealth program and what their roles will be.

2. Perform a needs analysis to determine the specialties you wish to provide services for and how those needs will be met. A quality needs analysis includes clinical staff in identifying both patient and provider requirements.

3. Keep your model in line with your organization’s vision, mission, and strategic plan.

4. Grow your telehealth champions. Identify staff members that play key roles in creating an inviting and nurturing telehealth environment. Telehealth champions encourage others to develop the key skills that make a program successful. The California Telemedicine and eHealth Center says, “Many consider clinical and administrative champions to lead and sustain the development of a telehealth programs vision as the most important factor for success” (source - www.cteconline.org).

5. Get the right equipment and be sure it is up-to-date. You can look into grants and other funding resources through the California Telehealth Network (www.caltelehealth.org).

6. Designate enthusiastic telehealth coordinator, referral coordinator or manager. No telehealth program will succeed without a dedicated, trained, and efficient manager working in sync with your telehealth champions. Also, ensure a backup coordinator or manager is equally knowledgeable on your telehealth program.

7. Create a convenient and effective telehealth space reminiscent of a traditional care environment.
8. Routinely educate physicians and clinical staff at your office on your telehealth program and efforts. Bring up the telehealth program as often as possible at monthly meetings and through emails.

9. Create your medical center’s telehealth program workflow. Every medical center is different, which means your needs may be different than other successful programs. Include your telehealth vendor and PHC in developing your telehealth program workflow.

10. Educate the patient on what will take place at the telehealth appointment prior to the appointment date so the patient is familiar with the process. Well-informed patients are more likely to show up for the appointment if they know what to expect. You can even share the specialist’s bio with the patient to help the patient learn about.

11. Ask the patient not to cancel their appointment, if at all possible. If a patient needs to cancel their appointment, recommend that they cancel at least 72 hours before the scheduled time in order for you to try to fill the spot with another patient in need of services. If the patient needs to cancel on the day of the appointment, explain why it is important to keep the appointment since specialty access is so limited.

12. If the specialist agrees, try double booking the first few appointments. Missed appointments are missed opportunities for other patients to see the specialist (source - Leslie Warner, Shasta Community Health Center).

13. Call, or send patients texts, letters, emails, or postcards, to remind them of their upcoming appointment. Call the patient at 24-48 hours prior to their scheduled appointment and on the day of the appointment to avoid or decrease no shows and cancellations. Watch this video from Health eFormatics to learn more help on this: https://youtu.be/ivu6Y6W40Ys.

14. Understand the patients’ barriers to getting to the appointment on time. For example, do they need transportation? Identify if there are any available resources for the patient. PHC has many resources available to assist patients with transportation and other needs.

15. Since telehealth appointment dates and times are typically on a fixed schedule, try to book patients during a block of time that works for the patients. Patients are more likely to show up for their appointment when the visit fits into their schedule.

16. Having an internal “No Show Policy” can be very helpful. For example, “If a patient misses two appointments then they miss the opportunity to be scheduled for future video telehealth appointments” (source - Leslie Warner, Shasta Community Health Center).

17. Make sure the telehealth room is set up properly for the appointment ahead of time. Watch this video from the California Telehealth Resource Center (CTRC) on Room Set Up: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6M1yc3FTAM or view the telemedicine Room Design Program guide found at www.telehealthresourcecenter.org.

18. Keep in contact with PHC and your telehealth vendor to address any issues or concerns that arise. The more involved we are, the better the outcome.
19. Continue to promote your telehealth program, highlighting its successes with patients’ stories.

20. Network with coordinators and managers from other medical centers to understand how their telehealth program is thriving.

21. Strive to seek out additional telehealth resources, such as through blogs, email, and conferences.

For questions or additional information, please contact telemedicine@partnershiphp.org

For more information about PHC’s telehealth services, visit:
http://www.partnershiphp.org/Providers/Quality/Pages/Telehealth-Services.aspx