



## Telehealth Message for Occupational Therapists

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, the health and safety of our customers, partners and employees continue to be a top priority for us. We are working to support best practice in clinical care and are following the advice of provincial health officials.

To support our customers' recovery during this time, we will continue to temporarily fund telehealth sessions, until further notice. As customer safety and injury rehabilitation are of utmost importance, treatment providers will continue to be held to appropriate standards.

To be eligible for funding, occupational therapy services must be delivered by approved and qualified providers on an as-needed basis, according to the [College of Occupational Therapists of B.C.](#)'s telehealth guidelines, and in accordance with our requirements. Current funding authorizations can be accessed for telehealth treatments and do not require separate standalone authorizations. Any treatment extension or additional requests must be approved by a Claims or Recovery Specialist in order to be payable.

Telehealth, for the purposes of this policy, includes telephone and video technology, and can continue to be billed to us using the standard line items outlined in the [occupational therapy HCPIR line item guide](#). All services delivered via telehealth must be clearly identified according to the College's Practice Standards in the customer's records.

Measures are in place to help protect the safety of both the customer's physical self, as well as their personal and private information. To provide telehealth services to our customers, you must adhere to the following three principles:

- 1) **Patient Safety:** Every effort should be made to ensure customers have another individual present in their vicinity during telehealth sessions. If it is not possible, and clinical judgement concludes that sessions are safe to proceed, the health care provider must:
  - Obtain the customer's alternate contact information (outside of the telehealth medium).
  - Confirm an emergency contact (care provider, family member, etc.).
  - Document the local emergency services contact information in advance of any telehealth sessions.
  
- 2) **Appropriate Technical Solution:** To protect customers' information, telehealth must only be delivered via appropriate applications and solutions. Where services are delivered by a means other than telephone, providers must ensure that:
  - Telehealth is delivered using a confirmed, secure, authenticated and encrypted application.  
*Note: Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Facebook Messenger and other consumer-grade applications are not considered secure or appropriate for medical care.*
  - Information recorded or noted during the session is stored in compliance with applicable privacy legislation and regulations, and that any appropriate consent has been obtained.

- 3) **Consent:** Customers must understand how telehealth services are delivered so they can make an informed decision regarding whether to receive care in this way. Before providing telehealth services, you must:
- Ensure the customer has received a written description of the telehealth service.
  - Obtain and document the customer's informed consent to participate in telehealth sessions.

### **Rehabilitation Assistant Services**

Both the Occupational Therapist (OT) and the rehabilitation assistant must abide by the College's practice standards and guidelines. All assigned duties must be clearly documented and appropriately communicated to the Claims or Recovery Specialist. Services must be billed in accordance with established [rates and guidelines](#).

Any person acting under the supervision of an OT must adhere to the standards of our Telehealth Policy in providing services via telehealth. It is critical that the OT uses discretion in determining which services are safe and appropriate for delivery via telehealth platforms, and which are suitable for delivery by an assigned individual. It is also essential that:

- the OT is aware of the scheduled rehabilitation assistant session,
- the OT is available in real time to support the rehabilitation assistant, and
- the rehabilitation assistant understands how and when to contact the occupational therapist particularly in case of an emergency.

We thank you for your diligence and support in protecting customer safety, and encourage you to regularly visit our [COVID-19 updates page](#) to stay up to date on any further developments. If you have any questions about the alternate procedures in place during the pandemic, please contact the **Health Care Inquiry Unit:**

- [Health care provider inquiry and feedback form](#)
- **Phone:** 604-587-7150
- **Toll free:** 1-888-717-7150
- **Hours:** Monday-Friday, 8:30a.m. – 4:00p.m. PST