Telehealth Access Points (TAPs) Best Practices Guide

What are TAPs?

A Telehealth Access Point (TAP) is a dedicated public space for individuals to access a telehealth appointment. These spaces consist of an adequate internet connection, a device with working camera, speaker and microphone, as well as privacy considerations in the form of a dedicated room or kiosk where the telehealth visit can be conducted. TAPs may also have support staff to assist an individual through a telehealth appointment if needed.

What Equipment is Needed?

Setting up a room for telehealth appointments should contain a few key features to ensure clear communication and connection, optimal productivity, and the best user experience. Essential items include:

- **High-Quality Video Camera**: Ensures clear and professional telehealth communication during video appointments.

- **Speakers or Headphones with a Microphone**: Facilitates effective audio communication for telehealth sessions.

- **Multiple Computer Screens**: Enhances visibility and productivity, especially for multitasking or detailed reviews.

- **Reliable Computer**: Supports the use of web-based telehealth applications and software.

- **Advanced Video/Audio Technology**: Optimizes the performance of external devices and ensures seamless interaction.

- **Strong Internet Connection**: Provides stable access to web-based platforms and prevents disruptions.

- **Soundproofing or Proper Sound Treatment**: Maintains privacy and minimizes distractions for those using the space.

- **Adequate Lighting**: Improves video quality and ensures professional, clear interactions.

- **Neutral Wall Colors and Minimal Décor**: Creates a clean and distraction-free visual background for virtual appointments.

- **Secure Enclosures**: Ensures privacy and compliance with security standards during telehealth sessions.

Additional information on the type of equipment needed can be found in the Idaho Commission of Libraries' [Library Telehealth 101: A Guide to Getting Started](#).

Sanitization Procedures

Developing a cleaning protocol is strongly encouraged. Frequently touched items such as the camera, keyboard, mouse, monitor screens, and speakers should be wiped down regularly. A clean cloth with disinfectant spray can be used to effectively eliminate bacteria to maintain a hygienic space.

Additional information on sanitization procedures can be found in the Idaho Commission of Libraries' [Library Telehealth 101: A Guide to Getting Started](#).

Scheduling Tools

An essential factor of a successful telehealth program is determining how patrons schedule time in the room/pod. This process also presents one of the greatest risks for HIPAA violations. Several scheduling methods are listed below:

- Phone/Email Booking
- In-Person Booking
- Online Booking Platform

Factors to consider when choosing a scheduling method include efficiency, ease of use for patients, and compliance with HIPAA guidelines.

Digital or Care Navigators & TAPs

A digital or care navigator is a trusted guide who assists community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Their services include ongoing assistance with obtaining affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and access to essential services, like healthcare.

The digital or care navigator framework is highly adaptable and can be implemented by organizations already offering digital or healthcare services within their communities. The specific goals of a digital or care navigator can be tailored to meet the unique needs of each program. For example, having a digital or care navigator assist individuals in using a TAP can play a critical role in bridging gaps and ensuring access to healthcare services.

These individuals have many titles, and may be volunteers or staff who work at resource-focused institutions such as libraries, community centers, clinics, social service agencies, or other community anchor institutions.

Digital or Care Navigator Resources
- Navigating the Telehealth Neighborhood Training
    - Instructions for Access
- NCTRC Digital Navigation Toolkit

Building Community Partnerships for Success

Building community partnerships is essential for the successful creation of TAPs, as it ensures that services are tailored to meet the unique needs of diverse populations. Local organizations, healthcare providers, schools, and community leaders can play a pivotal role in identifying gaps in access, raising awareness, and promoting the adoption of telehealth solutions.

Collaborative efforts help to address barriers such as technological limitations, lack of digital literacy, and transportation challenges that often prevent underserved groups from benefiting from telehealth services. By fostering these partnerships, stakeholders can also work together to create sustainable infrastructure, share resources, and offer support systems that enhance both patient experience and healthcare outcomes. Ultimately, community-driven collaborations are crucial to expanding access and ensuring that telehealth initiatives are equitable, effective, and accessible to all.

Additional information on building partnerships and outreach can be found in the Idaho Commission of Libraries' Library Telehealth 101: A Guide to Getting Started.

Different TAP Models

TAP models can be used in easily accessible locations in rural communities, including libraries, banks, kiosks, or any preferred community anchor institution. The TAPs model is customizable to fit the needs of almost any organization that is looking to connect their community with more telehealth and digital health services. More information on the different types of models can be found through the resource links below.

- *Libraries as TAPs:*
    - Telehealth 101: What Libraries Need to Know (National Libraries of Medicine) (online course module approved for 3 MLA CE credits)
    - 2023 Public Library Technology Survey Summary Report (Public Library Association)
    - Telehealth in Libraries: Pre-Implementation Workbook (National Working Group for Telemedicine in Libraries)
    - Library Telehealth Guide (Education Networks of America)
    - Idaho Commission for Libraries Telehealth Toolkit
        - Library Telehealth 101: A Guide to Getting Started
    - Delaware Libraries
        - Getting Telehealthy at Your Library Part 1
        - Getting Telehealthy at Your Library Part 2

- ***Banks as TAPs:***
  - [Banking on telehealth to reach rural patients](#) (Fierce Healthcare)
- ***Kiosks as TAPs:***
  - [New Telehealth Kiosks for Rural Illinois Being Developed by CI MED Innovators](#) (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Carle Illinois College of Medicine)
  - [Chekhov and a Checkup: Delaware Libraries Introduce Telehealth Kiosks](#) (Tech Target)
  - [Publix Opens 4th Telehealth Site in South Carolina](#) (Progressive Grocer)
  - [Healthcare Organizations are Taking Another Look at Telehealth Kiosks](#) (HealthLeaders Media)
  - ['Telehealth pod' at Salem church brings health care into Queen City neighborhood](#) (Dallas Free Press)

General Resource Links:
- [TAP Into Telehealth: Innovative Models of Telehealth Access Points (TAPs) Webinar](#)
- [Expanding Rural Access – Key Insights From Implementing Telehealth Access Points Across Oklahoma](#)
- NRTRC Find Telehealth Map (toggle TAPs to "on" to see known TAPs locations across the U.S.)
  - [Submit the Location of a TAP](#)
  - [Find Telehealth Digital Guide](#)
- [Idaho Commission for Libraries Telehealth Toolkit](#)
- [Library Telehealth Guide](#) (Education Networks of America)
- [VA proposes funding telehealth access points at non-VA facilities](#) (NextGov/FCW)