

DETERMINING IF TELEHEALTH IS AN APPROPRIATE MODALITY

Factors to Consider

Telehealth can be an effective tool to deliver care especially for populations that may otherwise not receive the care they need.¹ However, it is important RDs make the determination if telehealth is an appropriate modality for care on a case-by-case basis ensuring that if MNT is delivered via telehealth, the care delivered will meet the same standard of care as an in-person visit.

Before scheduling or continuing a telehealth visit, clinicians should confirm that:

Clinical need and acuity fit telehealth.

- The patient's condition can be evaluated and managed safely without a hands-on exam, procedure, or immediate access to anthropometric measurements.² Examples of conditions that may need to be seen in-person for at least initial assessment and periodic monitoring include malnutrition and disordered eating.

Telehealth can meet the standard of care.

- Available technology (video or, if permitted, audio-only) allows an adequate history, visual assessment if needed, medication review, and shared decision-making.³
- The RD has access to tools and resources that would support clinical decision making comparable to an in-person visit.

The patient, setting, and technology are suitable.

- The patient (and caregiver, if applicable) can access and use the technology or has support to do so, and has a private, safe, and distraction-free environment.¹²
- Telehealth will not worsen disparities such as language barriers or disability, or low digital literacy will not materially degrade care quality.⁴

Regulatory, ethical, and payer requirements are met.

- The modality is permitted for the clinical service in the patient's state, under applicable licensure, and by the patient's payer.^{5,6}
- The clinician follows ethical telemedicine principles: transparent telehealth-specific informed consent, privacy/confidentiality protection, data security, and clear plans for follow-up and escalation to in-person care if needed.⁷

If any of these domains cannot be met, best practice is to pivot to an in-person visit or higher level of care and document the rationale.

For more information about telehealth, please refer to the Academy's [Best Practices for Registered Dietitians Working with Telehealth Nutrition Companies to Provide Nutrition Services](#).

¹ Telehealth for nutrition care and services, *Getting started: Understanding telehealth for nutrition care*, Health Resources & Service Administration, available at: <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/best-practice-guides/telehealth-nutrition-care-and-services/getting-started-telenutrition> (last accessed January 5, 2026).

² Nutrition Counseling Checklist: Two-Way Interactive Audio-Video Telehealth, California Telehealth Resource Center, available at: <https://caltrc.org/news/nutrition-counseling-checklist-two-way-interactive-audio-video-telehealth/> (last accessed November 24, 2025).

³ Telehealth for nutrition care and services, *Preparing patients to receive nutrition care using telehealth*, Telehealth.HHS.gov, available at: <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/best-practice-guides/telehealth-nutrition-care-and-services/preparing-patients-telenutrition> (last accessed November 24, 2025).

⁴ Telehealth for Providers: What You Need to Know, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, available at: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/telehealth-toolkit-providers.pdf> (last accessed November 24, 2025).

⁵ Evidence- and Consensus-Based Digital Healthcare Equity Framework. (Prepared by Johns Hopkins University under Contract No. 75Q80120D00015.) AHRQ Publication No. 24-0020-1-EF. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, February 2024, available at: https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-03/health-equity-framework_AHRQ-publication_2024.pdf (last accessed November 24, 2025).

⁶ Medicaid & Medicare Overview, Center for Connected Health Policy, available at: <https://www.cchpca.org/topic/overview/> (last accessed November 24, 2025).

⁷ Private Payer Requirements, Center for Connected Health Policy, available at: <https://www.cchpca.org/topic/requirements/> (last accessed November 24, 2025).

⁸ Legal considerations, Telehealth.HHS.gov, available at: <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/legal-considerations> (last accessed November 24, 2025).