

### WHY INTRODUCE TELEMEDICINE?

Currently, the telemedicine technology market is expected to grow at an annual rate of more than 18 percent by 2020. Arkansas is fortunate to be one of 41 states that has a telemedicine act, meaning health plans reimburse on the same basis as in-person services. Arkansas passed its telemedicine parity legislation in 2015 and passed additional laws during the 2016 legislative session which will greatly expand telemedicine coverage.

During the last several years, more and more people have been exposed to some form of telemedicine. Many providers are now seeing the benefits and want to expand options and increase access to patient care and insurance providers throughout the state.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

In Arkansas, telemedicine has not only increased provider efficiency, but has the potential to reduce in-office overhead, making it possible for the provider to see more patients and/or spend more time on each visit. Furthermore, the convenience of access to care will make it easier for patients to keep scheduled appointments. It will allow the provider flexibility in balancing work and life by offering additional options to work from home and allow for flexible work hours while reducing the time it takes to see patients.

### COST SAVINGS

- Increase Quality of Care
- Flexible Schedule
- Greater Access
- Improve Outcomes
- Improve Delivery of Services
- Increase Revenue
- Reduction in Travel Time
- Increase Efficiency



## WHERE DO I START?

Oftentimes, many people become frustrated and confused when looking at technology and deciding the best option for patients. This guide, along with the assistance of the Arkansas e-Link Network, will assist you in navigating the changing technology and help to determine who and what will work best for your practice. It will also help you implement the basic steps to launch a telemedicine practice while expanding telemedicine services in your practice or group.

Cost has been one of the barriers for telemedicine implementation or expansion; however, technology has drastically changed since telemedicine's inception and has become more cost efficient with the introduction of cloud-based technology and cellular connectivity.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

**Set Goals/Timeline** – Identify goals for implementation, a method to measure progress, and set a timeline.

**Know the Law** – Research your state and federal laws regarding eligibility for reimbursement via telemedicine. Recent changes to legislation regarding telemedicine in Arkansas have been compiled by the Center for Connected Health Policy and can be found at this link: <http://www.cchpca.org/sites/default/files/resources.pdf>

**Start Small** – Find that one person who is open to telemedicine, as you will need a champion who is dedicated to leading the program.

**Develop a Business Plan** – Determine the scope of services that will be provided and know the reimbursement rate for those services.

**Example:** Providing consult telemedicine specialty clinic for the patient as a convenience, your site may be eligible for a facility fee for use of the space and equipment. If it's a service you are not currently getting paid for, you probably will not get reimbursed for a telemedicine encounter.

**Determine the Services Specific to Your Needs** – Explore what services are currently being referred out to specialists. Work with providers that offer specialty services that you are currently referring and utilize telemedicine to keep your patients local. There may be additional cost savings to you and your patients by offering labs, X-rays and other services routinely done in medical offices. Your facility may be eligible for a facility fee for the use of your office.

# Starting Your Telemedicine Clinic

**Stay Connected** – The Arkansas e-Link Network ([www.arkansaselink.com](http://www.arkansaselink.com)) is a helpful resource for information on current laws and regulations and provides additional tools to help facilitate with implementation. Another useful resource is <http://learntelehealth.org> . These links are great resources for guidance and expert advice on how to support and promote telemedicine integration in a healthcare setting.

**Security** – Understanding HIPAA and privacy rules are very important items to consider in telemedicine. Ensure your technology partner is utilizing HIPAA compliant equipment and that the network is encrypted to ensure privacy. Having a Business Associate Agreement with the technology partner is also recommended to ensure patient data safety. When providing patient care via telemedicine, it is always good practice to have an informed video consent along with information detailing what to expect during a telemedicine visit.

**Choose Your Technology Partner** – This is the most important step. If the technology being used is not acceptable to the pay source, then the service may not be a reimbursed service. Ensure your technology partner is currently on the list of pay sources in Arkansas before purchasing any equipment/software. Choose a platform that will meet your needs, as its imperative you evaluate the provider and technology for ease of use, security, ease of integration, branding, and regulations verification. Your technology provider should be your partner and be readily available to help with any questions that may arise with concerns to connectivity. They should also provide 24/7 technical support to minimize disruptions in your clinic.