

Department of Health
Office of Health Professions and Facilities
The Board of Hearing and Speech

Guideline

Title:	Telepractice	
References:	RCWs 18.35, 18.130, and 70.02 RCW, and chapters 246-16 and 246-828 WAC; American Speech- Language Hearing Association	
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Approved By:	Courtenay Hendricks, Chair (signature on file)	

Purpose Statement:

The Board of Hearing and Speech supports telepractice services when it is a clinically appropriate model of service audiologists, hearing aid specialists, speech-language pathologists, and speech-language pathologist assistants deliver when the patient cannot be at the same physical location. Telepractice services are becoming more easily accessible for rural patients with advances in technology. Rapid changes of technology, as well as how people communicate, can potentially increase access, lower costs, and improve the quality of services for patients.

Definitions

“Telepractice” means the delivery of teleaudiology, telehearing aid specialist services, telespeech-language pathology, and/or speech teletherapy through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for clinical assessment, intervention and/or consultation consistent with respective scopes of practice in chapters 18.35 RCW and 246-828 WAC. For the purpose of this section only, “telepractice” does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, text or email.

“Store and forward technology” means use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered patient’s medical or personal information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site that results in diagnosis or management of the covered patient, and does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, text or email.

For the purpose of this policy statement, the term “telepractice and telehealth” includes both “telepractice” and “store and forward technology.”

Telepractice of hearing and speech providers means licensed audiologists, hearing aid specialists, speech-language pathologists, and speech-language pathology assistants.

Standard of Care:

Audiologists, hearing aid specialists, speech-language pathologists, and speech-language pathology assistants using telepractice to provide therapy to patients who are located in Washington State must be licensed in Washington. The hearing and speech services provided via telepractice must be provided consistent with the standard of care required for audiologists, hearing aid specialists, speech-language pathologists, and speech-language pathologist assistants practicing in the state of Washington and as defined in chapters 18.35 RCW and 246-828 WAC.

- 1) Telepractice providers must be competent with both the technologies used, and the potential effect of the use of telepractice services on patients and auxiliary staff members.
- 2) Telepractice providers must obtain and document informed consent that specifically addresses concerns related to the telepractice services they provide. Such informed consent must be reasonably understandable to patients.

Informed consent may include, but is not limited to:

- a) The manner in which the hearing and speech providers will use particular telecommunications technologies, the boundaries that will be established and observed, and procedures for responding to electronic communications from patients;
 - b) Limitations on the availability and/or appropriateness of specific telepractice services.
- 3) Telepractice providers must take reasonable steps to protect and maintain the confidentiality of data and information relating to their patients, consistent with federal and state laws protecting health care information.
 - 4) Providers should document in the patient records what services they provided via telepractice.