

# AHS Healthcare Professional Considerations in Virtual Care

## Background

AHS Virtual Health enables Alberta Health Services (AHS) clinical programs to deliver health services, expertise and information over distance, improving access and reducing barriers to patient care across Alberta and beyond.

## Health Professional Resources for Virtual Care / Telehealth

AHS health professionals are encouraged to become familiar with policies, standards, guidelines and/or recommendations provided by Alberta Health Services (AHS), AHS Virtual Health and healthcare professional Colleges (regulatory authorities) and Associations, related to delivering care using virtual care technologies.

Considerations for AHS health professionals in the virtual care environment include but are not limited to:

- College requirements with respect to virtual clinics, telemedicine, licensing / registration
- Ethical, professional, legal obligations
- Appropriateness of virtual care delivery to support best patient outcomes
- Obtain patient verbal agreement to attend the virtual visit using technology
- High quality, best practice care delivery
- Documentation and access to patient medical records, and records management
- Patient privacy and confidentiality of personal health information
- Responsible online prescribing
- Ensuring continuity of care

See [Appendix 1 - Virtual Care / Telehealth Resources - Alberta Healthcare Provider Colleges and Associations](#) for links to publicly available information and resources related to considerations for healthcare professionals in virtual care / telehealth environments. Clinicians are encouraged to contact their professional College or Association with questions about virtual care and to stay up to date with available resources.

**Virtual Health Recommendations** for AHS Health Professionals are located on the [Virtual Health page](#) on AHS Insite.

## Responding to Patient Emergencies during Virtual Care

Steps should be taken by all AHS clinicians during a virtual care appointment, via telephone or videoconference, to mitigate potential risks including medical emergencies.

**Prior to starting the virtual care appointment**, if the patient is at an AHS or subsidiary facility, then ensure you refer to AHS facility emergency response plans.

**Upon starting the virtual care appointment**, the clinician should:

- Identify the patient's exact location; many virtual care appointments occur outside of an AHS facility, so it is important to confirm the address of the patient's physical location. Note:
  - This may differ from the mailing address for rural locations.
  - If meeting with a group of patients, ask their location privately as part of the *Verification of Participant Identity* process outlined in [Zoom Group Sessions](#).

- Complete provider and patient identity verification, including collecting names and relationships of others present. Refer to the [Provider & Patient Identity Verification](#) recommendation.
- Obtain a phone number where the patient can be contacted, if disconnected.

**If a medical emergency occurs during a virtual appointment**, then the clinician should remain connected with the patient, and follow the steps below, until Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrives:

- If the medical emergency occurs with a participant during a virtual group session, then the clinician should request all of the other patients leave the virtual appointment, or remove them  
Note: ensure other patients are contacted subsequently to follow-up and reschedule.
- Call out to the patient to determine responsiveness or breathing, and assess for other life threatening conditions (e.g., serious bleeding) or obvious injury that can be seen.
- Assess, *or work with others present* with the patient physically if applicable, to determine scene safety to avoid further risk to the patient or others.
- If possible, *request help from someone present* at the patient's location.
- Seek a second person, either with the clinician or with the patient, to call 911\*, and instruct them to report back to you; if this is not possible, the clinician may need to call 911 themselves.  
\*Note: The Emergency Operator will require the clinician's phone number, the address of the patient location, and any additional details about the location/scene.
- If possible, determine if the patient has an Advanced Care Plan/Goals of Care Designation.
- When EMS arrives, provide transfer of information to EMS for continuity of care.
- Document the event within the patient's legal record of care, and incident reporting system if applicable, as per AHS policy and professional standards.
- Notify the Most Responsible Healthcare Provider of the incident

### Out of Province Care using Virtual Health (Telehealth)

Legislation / regulations / bylaws for Telehealth differ in every province/territory and country. As per the AHS Health Professions Strategy and Practice - Professional Practice Notice (see [Appendix 1](#)): When an Alberta Health Services regulated clinician is planning to provide virtual health services to patient(s) outside of the Alberta border, it is prudent to contact the province or territory's regulatory authority where the patient is located, to determine the licensing or registration requirements in that jurisdiction. The clinician should also follow up and discuss next steps with their supervisor.

**Contact your professional College or Association if you have questions about recommendations and requirements for virtual care / telehealth**

*Have a resource to add to this document?*

*Does a link / URL to a resource need updating?*

**Contact Virtual Health at [VirtualHealth.Info@ahs.ca](mailto:VirtualHealth.Info@ahs.ca)**

[See Appendix 1: Virtual Care / Telehealth Resources - Alberta Healthcare Provider Colleges and Associations.](#)

Please note AHS Virtual Health frequently reviews and updates documents. To ensure you are using the most current version, please download directly from the Virtual Health [internal](#) or [external](#) webpage at the time of use.

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### Appendix 1 - Virtual Care / Telehealth Resources - Alberta Healthcare Provider Colleges and Associations

The links below lead to publicly available information and resources provided by Healthcare Professional Colleges, Associations and/or Organizations. There may be other resources that are not listed in the table below. Clinicians are encouraged to contact their professional College or Association with questions about virtual care and to stay up to date with available resources.

**\*NOTE:** This information is current as of July, 2019 and subject to change. Contact your regulatory College or Association for the most up to date information related to virtual care / telehealth.

Healthcare Provider Discipline	Healthcare Provider Professional College, Association or Organization	Resource Title and Link to Resource	URL Link to Resource
Alberta Health Services (AHS) Healthcare Providers and Physicians	AHS Health Professions Strategy and Practice	Professional Registration Requirements for Out-of-Province Telepractice	Located on AHS Insite
Dietitians	<a href="#">College of Dietitians of Alberta</a>	<a href="#">Standards of Practice - Virtual Dietetic Practice</a>	<a href="http://www.collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CDA-Standards-of-Practice-October-2018.pdf">http://www.collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CDA-Standards-of-Practice-October-2018.pdf</a>
		<a href="#">The Professional Practice Handbook for Dietitians in Alberta</a>	<a href="http://collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Professional-Practice-Handbook-for-Dietitians-in-Alberta-2014.pdf">http://collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Professional-Practice-Handbook-for-Dietitians-in-Alberta-2014.pdf</a>
		<a href="#">Regulated Member Handbook</a>	<a href="http://collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Regulated-Member-Handbook-2019.pdf">http://collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Regulated-Member-Handbook-2019.pdf</a>
		<a href="#">Dietitians using virtual, electronic communications</a>	<a href="http://www.collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Dietitians-using-Electronic-or-Virtual-Communications.pdf">http://www.collegeofdietitians.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Dietitians-using-Electronic-or-Virtual-Communications.pdf</a>
Nurses	<a href="#">CNA - Canadian Nurses Association</a>	<a href="#">Telehealth Fact Sheet</a>	<a href="https://www.cna-aic.ca/-/media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/telehealth-fact-sheet.pdf">https://www.cna-aic.ca/-/media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/telehealth-fact-sheet.pdf</a>
	<a href="#">CARNA – College &amp; Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta</a>	<a href="#">Telehealth nursing practice</a>	<a href="https://nurses.ab.ca/standards-and-learning/telehealth-nursing-practice">https://nurses.ab.ca/standards-and-learning/telehealth-nursing-practice</a>

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	<a href="#">CRNPA – College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta</a>	<a href="#">Telehealth Psychiatric Nursing Practice</a>	<a href="https://www.crpna.ab.ca/CRPNAMember/Library/CRPNAMember/Library/Library.aspx?hkey=6e8e7f1c-567e-48b8-aadb-b52c979aa3e1">https://www.crpna.ab.ca/CRPNAMember/Library/CRPNAMember/Library/Library.aspx?hkey=6e8e7f1c-567e-48b8-aadb-b52c979aa3e1</a>  <i>*Link to resource is on the webpage in the Practice Direction and Positions Statements section.</i>
Occupational Therapists	<a href="#">ACOT - Alberta College of Occupational Therapists</a>	<a href="#">Practice Guideline: OT Service Delivery Using Virtual Means</a>	<a href="https://acot.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Interim-Practice-Guideline-on-OT-Service-Delivery-Using-Virtual-Means.pdf">https://acot.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Interim-Practice-Guideline-on-OT-Service-Delivery-Using-Virtual-Means.pdf</a>
	<a href="#">Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists</a>	<a href="#">CAOT Position Statement: Tele-occupational therapy and e-occupational therapy (2011)</a>	<a href="https://caot.in1touch.org/document/3717/T%20-%20Telehealth%20and%20E-Occupational%20Therapy.pdf">https://caot.in1touch.org/document/3717/T%20-%20Telehealth%20and%20E-Occupational%20Therapy.pdf</a>
Optometrists	<a href="#">Alberta College of Optometrists</a>	<a href="#">Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline: Telehealth</a>	<a href="https://collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Telehealth-2020.pdf">https://collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Telehealth-2020.pdf</a>
Pharmacists	<a href="#">Alberta College of Pharmacy</a>	<a href="#">Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians</a>	<a href="https://abpharmacy.ca/sites/default/files/StandardsofPractice.pdf">https://abpharmacy.ca/sites/default/files/StandardsofPractice.pdf</a>
Physicians	<a href="#">AMA - Alberta Medical Association</a>	<a href="#">AMA Policy Statement on Health Informatics</a>	<a href="https://www.albertadoctors.org/News%20pdfs/ama-policy-health-informatics.pdf">https://www.albertadoctors.org/News%20pdfs/ama-policy-health-informatics.pdf</a>
	<a href="#">CMPA - Canadian Medical Protective Association</a>	<a href="#">eCommunication Good Practices Guide – Safe Care, Reducing Medical-Legal Risk</a>	<a href="https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/serve/docs/ela/goodpracticesguide/pages/communication/Privacy_and_Confidentiality/ecommunication-e.html">https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/serve/docs/ela/goodpracticesguide/pages/communication/Privacy_and_Confidentiality/ecommunication-e.html</a>
		<a href="#">Smartphone recordings by patients: Be prepared, it's happening</a>	<a href="https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2017/smartphone-recordings-by-patients-be-prepared-it-s-happening">https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2017/smartphone-recordings-by-patients-be-prepared-it-s-happening</a>
		<a href="#">Thinking of working with virtual clinics? Consider these medical-legal issues</a>	<a href="https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2018/thinking-of-working-with-virtual-clinics---consider-these-medical-legal-issues">https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2018/thinking-of-working-with-virtual-clinics---consider-these-medical-legal-issues</a>

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		<a href="#">Videoconferencing consultation: When is it the right choice?</a>	<a href="https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2015/videoconferencing-consultation-when-is-it-the-right-choice">https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2015/videoconferencing-consultation-when-is-it-the-right-choice</a>
		<a href="#">Meeting the standard of care is key, no matter the clinical setting – medical liability risk of providing virtual care</a>	<a href="https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2021/safe-care-amid-the-pandemic-virtually-and-in-person?utm_source=MAR21EN&amp;utm_medium=Email&amp;utm_campaign=EbulletinE">https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2021/safe-care-amid-the-pandemic-virtually-and-in-person?utm_source=MAR21EN&amp;utm_medium=Email&amp;utm_campaign=EbulletinE</a>
	<a href="#">CPSA - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta</a>	<a href="#">Standard of Practice - Telemedicine</a>	<a href="http://www.cpsa.ca/standardspractice/telemedicine/">http://www.cpsa.ca/standardspractice/telemedicine/</a>
		<a href="#">Advice to the Profession - Telemedicine</a>	<a href="https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AP_Telemedicine.pdf">https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AP_Telemedicine.pdf</a>
		<a href="#">Advice to the Profession - Electronic Communications &amp; Security of Mobile Devices</a>	<a href="https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AP_Electronic-Communications-Mobile-Devices.pdf">https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AP_Electronic-Communications-Mobile-Devices.pdf</a>
	<a href="#">FMRAC – Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada</a>	<a href="#">FMRAC Framework on Telemedicine (2019)</a>	<a href="https://fmrac.ca/fmrac-framework-on-telemedicine/">https://fmrac.ca/fmrac-framework-on-telemedicine/</a>
<b>Physiotherapists</b>	<a href="#">Physiotherapy Alberta College &amp; Association</a>	<a href="#">Technology in Practice: Telerehabilitation</a>	<a href="https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/news/technology_in_practice_telerehabilitation">https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/news/technology_in_practice_telerehabilitation</a>
		<a href="#">Telerehabilitation Guide</a>	<a href="https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/resources_to_help_you_meet_practice_standards/telerehabilitation_guide">https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/physiotherapists/resources_to_help_you_meet_practice_standards/telerehabilitation_guide</a>

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		<a href="#">Telerehabilitation Resource Guide for Alberta Physiotherapists- pdf</a>	<a href="https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/files/guide_telerehabilitation.pdf">https://www.physiotherapyalberta.ca/files/guide_telerehabilitation.pdf</a>
<b><u>Psychologists</u></b>	<a href="#">College of Alberta Psychologists</a>	<a href="#">Practice Guideline: Telepsychology Services</a>	<a href="https://www.cap.ab.ca/Portals/0/pdfs/Practise%20Guideline%20-%20Telepsychology%20-%20October%202018.pdf?ver=2018-10-22-213429-123">https://www.cap.ab.ca/Portals/0/pdfs/Practise%20Guideline%20-%20Telepsychology%20-%20October%202018.pdf?ver=2018-10-22-213429-123</a>
<b><u>Respiratory Therapists</u></b>	<a href="#">College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta</a>	<a href="#">Documentation Guidelines for Registered Respiratory Therapists</a>	<a href="http://files.constantcontact.com/34fdc02a401/bf888215-89b7-4ab7-ba51-1b3c23ff7390.pdf">http://files.constantcontact.com/34fdc02a401/bf888215-89b7-4ab7-ba51-1b3c23ff7390.pdf</a>
<b><u>Social Workers</u></b>	<a href="#">Alberta College of Social Workers</a>	<a href="#">Standards of Practice</a>	<a href="https://acsw.in1touch.org/document/2672/DOC_FINALACSWStandardsOfPractice_V1_1_20200304.pdf">https://acsw.in1touch.org/document/2672/DOC_FINALACSWStandardsOfPractice_V1_1_20200304.pdf</a>
<b><u>Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists Therapy Assistants</u></b>	<a href="#">ACSLPA - Alberta College of Speech Language Pathologist and Audiologists</a>	<a href="#">Guideline - Telepractice</a> currently being revised –check the ACSLPA website for updated information)	<a href="https://www.acslpa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Telepractice.pdf">https://www.acslpa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Telepractice.pdf</a>
<b><u>Therapy Assistants</u></b>	<a href="#">Therapy Assistant Association of Alberta</a>	No written standard at this time. Includes Therapy Assistants in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Therapy</li> <li>• Occupational Therapy</li> <li>• Recreational Therapy</li> <li>• Speech-Language Pathology</li> </ul>	

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