



Board of Behavioral Sciences



1625 North Market Blvd., Suite S-200
Sacramento, CA 95834
(916) 574-7830
www.bbs.ca.gov

Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California
Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Department of Consumer Affairs

Telehealth Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is telehealth?

A: California law defines telehealth as a mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient's health care while the patient is at the originating site and health care provider is at the distant site. – see [California Business and Professions Code § 2290.5](#)

Q: Can a licensee of the Board of Behavioral Sciences provide telehealth services to a client located in another state?

A: It depends. Per [California Code of Regulations § 1815.5\(e\)](#), a licensee or registrant of this state may provide telehealth services to a client located in another jurisdiction **only** if the California licensee or registrant meets the requirements to lawfully provide services in that jurisdiction, and delivery of services via telehealth is allowed by that jurisdiction. It is the licensee's or registrant's responsibility to check with the other jurisdiction to determine if they can provide telehealth services in that state.

Q: Can a California licensee while out-of-state provide telehealth services to a client located in California?

A: Yes. Assuming the case is appropriate for telehealth, the licensee can provide telehealth services if their license is current and active, and the licensee follows the regulations outlined in California Code of Regulations, Title 16, § 1815.5.

In addition, a California associate whose registration number is current and active can continue to practice with clients located in California while the associate is out-of-state **if** the supervisor permits it.

Q: I am licensed in another state but do not hold a license in California. I will be traveling to or relocating to California. Can I continue providing services to clients who are located in the state where I am licensed?

A: Under California law, you may continue to provide services to clients located in your state of licensure, provided that such practice is permitted by the licensing board in that state. You are responsible for verifying this with that state's licensing authority.

However, in order to provide services to clients located in California, you must obtain a California license.

Q: Are out-of-state licensed clinicians allowed to provide telehealth services to pre-existing clients who are moving to or visiting California?

A: California regulations require an individual to have a current and active California license to provide marriage and family therapy, educational psychology, clinical social work, and professional clinical counseling services to clients located in California.

However, the Board offers a one-time per calendar year, 30-day temporary practice allowance, which allows qualifying marriage and family therapists, professional clinical counselors, and clinical social workers who are licensed in other states or jurisdictions of the U.S. to provide therapy services to an existing client while the client is travelling in California. More information about the temporary practice allowance and how to qualify can be found here, https://www.bbs.ca.gov/licensees/temporary_practice_allowance_faqs.pdf.

Q: Are there any guidelines for initiating telehealth services with a client?

A: Yes. When initiating telehealth services, a licensee or registrant shall do the following:

- 1) Obtain informed consent from the client consistent with 2290.5 of the Code.
- 2) Inform the client of the potential risks and limitations of receiving treatment via telehealth.
- 3) Provide the client with his or her license or registration number and the type of license or registration.
- 4) Document reasonable efforts made to ascertain the contact information of relevant resources, including emergency services, in the patient's geographic area.

Q: Is there anything that needs to be done each time I provide telehealth services to my client?

A: Yes. Each time a licensee or registrant provides services via telehealth, they shall do the following:



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- 1) Verbally obtain from the client and document the client's full name and address of present location, at the beginning of each telehealth session.
- 2) Assess whether the client is appropriate for telehealth, including, but not limited to, consideration of the client's psychosocial situation.
- 3) Utilize industry best practices for telehealth to ensure both client confidentiality and the security of the communication medium.