

**HAMILTON CENTER, INC.
OPERATIONS MANUAL**

Section: **MEDICAL**

Policy: **GENERAL TELEMEDICINE
PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS**

Policy No.: OP.12.08.00.00

Page 1 of 2

Date Originated: 02/13

Last R/R Date: 04/17

BOD Approval Date: 03/14

Posted: 04/17

PURPOSE

To explain the use and scope of telemedicine technology for the provision of mental health services.

POLICY

Telemedicine (also known as telehealth or telemental health) is the delivery of clinical care connecting the patient in one location to a practitioner in another location through two way interactive audio and visual technology. Telehealth technology is an effective and convenient means of providing behavioral health services especially to persons who may live in areas not easily accessible to the type of care needed or where a practitioner needed to provide a specific type of care is not readily available in the patient's living area. Hamilton Center, Inc. (HCI) will provide telemental health services as outlined below and in accordance with the current regulations that govern telemedicine services.

DEFINITIONS

Telehealth = is the delivery of eligible health care services utilizing a combination of HIPAA compliant information and technologies to enable the diagnosis, consultation, treatment education, and care management of patients in a location distant from his/her provider

Hub Site (also distant) = Location of the provider rendering services

Spoke Site (also origination/presentation site) = Location where the patient is physically present when telehealth services are provided

POLICY COMPONENTS

A. Telehealth does not include treatment by e-mail, facsimile, telephone only, or any other non-direct service, i.e. equipment set up etc. Interactive television and videoconferencing at the hub and spoke site must allow for real time, interactive, and face to face services/consultation and must be of a quality to adequately complete all necessary components of the specific service and or procedure. Additionally, equipment at the hub and spoke site must provide sufficient resolution and/or audio quality for decision making by the provider for the type of service rendered.

B. Services/office sites eligible for telehealth include:

1. Office or other outpatient evaluation and management services/visits;
2. Office or other outpatient consultations;

3. Psychological /psychiatric diagnostic evaluations; and
 4. Individual therapy.
- C. Ineligible types and/or sites of services for which Medicaid and other payors do not reimburse for telehealth services include waiver services, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, home health and long term care. Eligible sites and services may vary by payor, however, the services listed above in a clinic/office setting are commonly accepted by most commercial payors if the plan reimburses for telemedicine services. During the process of benefit verification, HCI staff will determine if telemedicine is a benefit offered by the patient's insurance plan.
- D. Hub and spoke site services must conform to a distance requirement. HCI will adhere to current Medicaid rules which state that the hub and spoke site must be at least 20 miles apart. HCI must also follow the rules of any other payor who has a specific requirement regarding the distance between a hub and spoke site.
- E. All patients must agree to telemental health delivery of a service before the service is offered by reviewing and signing the "Informed Consent to Participate in Telemental Health Outpatient Services." Consents for telemental health services will be kept at the spoke site and be valid for all telemental health services received throughout the center. A patient must be physically present at the spoke site and be able to actively participate in the service. In order to ensure that a patient may be able to benefit from the service delivered via telemental health, the patient's first encounter (usually evaluation) will be face to face with a clinician and discuss with the client the provision and types of telemental services recommended for the client before telemental health sessions are scheduled. HCI providers may also discuss with a patient during their course of telemental health when face-to-face sessions would be the better clinical alternative for continuing treatment and will work with the client to arrange alternative face-to face sessions which may include traveling to another location.
- F. Patients may also choose to decline telehealth services at any time during his/her course of treatment including if the person is uncomfortable during the course of any single session. The provider will then discuss with the client alternatives for face-to face care which may include traveling to another location.
- G. Throughout the patient's telemental health session staff must be available at the site to assist with technology issues and/or equipment set up. Depending on the service rendered, i.e. Evaluation and Management by a prescriber, staff at the spoke site may be required to obtain vitals such as height, weight, and blood pressure. The taking of vital measurements and assistance with the telehealth technology is not a separately reimbursable service. The HCI clinician must also document in his/her progress note the location of both the hub and spoke site.