

Cultural Competency in Telemedicine



Use these care tips to practice cultural competency in telemedicine and harness technology's potential to improve health equity.



Avoid assumptions

The digital divide is a significant concern with telemedicine. Refrain from assuming anyone has the access and savvy to navigate telehealth services. Be inquisitive and normalize technology differences. For example: "Many people find it confusing to navigate health services online. Do you feel comfortable trying a video meeting with a specialist?"



Establish clear communication

Explain telehealth services and treatment plans using simple language. Always arrange for professional interpretation if necessary. If you're unsure whether an interpreter should be involved, ask, "What language are you most comfortable using to discuss your healthcare?"



Accommodate and educate

Prepare instructions and educational materials explaining how to access telehealth services and the benefits of using virtual healthcare. If telemedicine isn't a fit for your patient, develop a plan to accommodate their needs in traditional healthcare settings.



Build trust early

Use communication strategies to build trust quickly since this can be harder with telemedicine than in person. For example, practice active listening, show empathy, and speak honestly and authentically to establish rapport with patients virtually.



Examine your own biases

Everyone holds implicit biases that can impact our perceptions and choices. Making a constant effort to understand, evaluate, and overcome those biases is key to improving patient satisfaction and health outcomes. Implicit bias training is an essential starting point.