

Tips for Successful Remote Visits – Veteran Directed Care (VDC) Providers

Care managers, peer mentors, and other service providers are now using remote contacts (phone, video conferencing) rather than in-person home visits, in order to practice social distancing. These tips may be helpful if you are a provider who is new to this way of conducting your work.

Prior to the appointment: Planning your visit

- Identify the kind of technology you will use to conduct the visit, confirming the availability of the necessary technology to your Veteran.
 - Ask if the Veteran has a smart phone or tablet (and inquire as to the operating system, for example, whether it is android or iOS) or a computer with a camera.
 - Ask the Veteran about their preference for what technology to use.
- Confirm the Veteran will have sufficient availability of internet access and/or cellular data.
- Ask if the Veteran needs any accommodations to participate in the remote visit. For example, a Veteran who is hard of hearing may need captioning on a phone call or videoconference call; Veteran who is deaf or deaf-blind may need an interpreter. Ask/learn how you can assist in obtaining those accommodations.
- If you plan to use a video teleconferencing platform (e.g. Zoom), become familiar with it, paying special attention to security settings. When choosing a platform, decide whether it needs to be “HIPAA Compliant”. If captioning will be needed on a video teleconferencing platform, learn how to set it up. Practice.
- Ask if the Veteran has ever used the identified platform/method. If they are new to it, provide accessible written instructions for installing and using the app. Offer to practice using the app with them for a test run.
- Find out in advance if the Veteran has any disabilities that will interfere with seeing or operating the controls, and identify a way to compensate for those (including using “built in” accessibility settings).
- Ask the Veteran if they want to have a friend or family member with them during the remote visit. Arrange in advance for that person to participate remotely in the visit. If the Veteran will have a friend or family member joining the remote visit, make sure they have the “app”, as well.
- Decide with the Veteran whether taking video on their smartphone (e.g. a virtual “tour” of the Veteran’s home) is possible and/or desirable.
- Send supportive materials and forms in advance, via the Veteran’s preferred accessible format and method.

- Make sure your technology is working well.
- Consider purchasing (or fabricating) a stand or holder for the phone or tablet, especially since the visit may take more than just a few minutes. It is challenging to talk, hold the phone steady (e.g. for video) concentrate and take notes at the same time. (Suggest the Veteran have one, as well!).
- If the selected platform has a record function, ask the Veteran if they are okay with you recording the visit. It may be helpful for future reference.

During the appointment

- Make sure your device is charged or connected to a power source, so you don't lose your connection in the middle of your visit.
- If you are using a cellphone, take the call from an area in your home with the best reception. Similarly, if relying on the internet, take the call from the area with the strongest signal.
- Arrange your environment for the time of your appointment so you won't have distractions (from children or pets, for example). Select a location with as little background noise as possible.
- Acknowledge that if your visit is "voice only" you won't be able to see body language cues. Check in with your Veteran regarding their understanding or concerns.
- Consider recording the visit if that is an option, and if the Veteran agrees. This may help you with meeting notes.
- Offer to send notes after the meeting to the Veteran in their preferred accessible format or by their preferred method (US Mail; text message or email).

After the appointment

Ask the Veteran about their overall level of satisfaction with the visit, and what can be improved.

For more information about assistive technology

Contact your state Assistive Technology Act program (locate your state program at www.AT3center.net/stateprogram).