

Tips for Successful Remote Visits for Veterans Enrolled in Veteran Directed Care (VDC)

Care managers, peer mentors, and other service providers may be asking you to meet with them “virtually” rather than via an in-person home visit, in order to practice social distancing. These tips may be helpful if you are new to the experience.

Prior to the appointment

- If you usually have a friend, direct support professional or family member with you during an in-person home visit, arrange in advance for that person to participate in the remote visit (either remotely or in-person).
- Find out what kind of technology will be used to conduct the visit, to make sure you have it available.
 - If your provider wants to use videoconferencing, but you don't have a smartphone, tablet or a camera on your computer, let them know you only can use (or prefer to use) the telephone.
 - If you need/want to purchase equipment that would facilitate your participation in video teleconferencing, ask if the cost of needed equipment and related services (such as training in how to use the technology) may be covered.
- Make sure you can hear well (e.g. via the phone, laptop or tablet audio), as important information will be transmitted.
- If you have difficulty seeing or accessing controls on a phone, laptop or tablet, make sure your provider knows.
- If you usually have difficulty hearing over the phone, you may want to explore ways to improve the telephone experience (e.g. through an amplified or captioned phone). You may be able to benefit from assistive technology devices and services to help you participate in remote visits. Your state Assistive Technology Act program can help you explore these options (www.AT3center.net/stateprogram).
- If you already use assistive technology for telecommunications, have it handy and “ready to go” for the visit. This includes making sure you have “fresh” hearing aid batteries and the hearing aid is on the right setting.
- Try to arrange your environment for the time of your appointment so you won't have distractions (from children or pets, for example).
- If you use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technology, you may want to “pre-program” messages pertinent to specific questions you'd like to ask. Conversely, you may

want to ask your provider in advance what they will be asking YOU, so you can prepare your responses. This may save time during the remote visit.

- Install the “app” (if any) on the technology that will be used for the visit: e.g. phone, tablet, or laptop. If you will have a friend or family member joining the visit remotely, make sure they have the “app”, as well. Ask for WRITTEN instructions for installing and using the app. Practice using the “app”, if possible. You can ASK for a test run.
- Consider purchasing (or fabricating) a stand or holder for the phone or tablet, especially if 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. Your state AT Act program can help you with these options.

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.
- Let your VDC care manager know you may have difficulty hearing or understanding. Remind them to speak slowly and clearly, free from background noise.
- Feel free to ask for information to be repeated.
- Let your VDC provider know if something was said that you do not understand. This is particularly important if your visit is “voice only” – your provider won’t be able to see body language cues that you are not understanding everything.
- Ask for visit notes, especially any follow up actions or appointments. Ask that the notes be sent to you in your preferred accessible format or by your preferred method (US Mail; text message or email).

After the appointment

Let your provider know your 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).