

Standards of Practice

Virtual Care

Standard

Physiotherapists incorporating virtual care in the delivery of quality, effective physiotherapy services do so in accordance with client preferences, and as indicated and appropriate to address client needs.

Expected outcomes

Clients can expect that virtual physiotherapy services are appropriate, safe, and effective.

Performance expectations

The physiotherapist:

- Is aware that virtual care is a method of physiotherapy service delivery that is subject to the same Standards of Practice and professional expectations as in-person physiotherapy services.
- Possesses sufficient training, knowledge, judgment and competency (including technological competency) to manage client care virtually.
- Employs reasonable safeguards (physical, technical, and administrative) to protect the privacy and security of client information.
- Has a professional, private location from which to provide virtual care.
- Confirms that adequate technology and supports are available to the client to enable virtual care.
- Confirms that the client has reliable internet access or phone connection and a private location from which to receive virtual care and if a private location is not available:
 - Takes reasonable action to manage client privacy.
 - Confirms client understanding of privacy risks within the available location and client informed consent to proceed with virtual care despite these risks.
- Assesses the appropriateness and method of providing virtual care on an ongoing basis, considering:
 - The client's circumstances and preferences for physiotherapy service delivery.
 - The client's diagnosis and treatment plan.
 - The physiotherapist's ability to provide appropriate assessment and treatment of the client's condition using virtual methods of physiotherapy service delivery.
 - Adaptations required to physiotherapy services to reflect virtual care considerations and constraints.
 - Relevant enabling or limiting factors that affect the ability to provide safe and effective virtual care.
- Obtains the client's informed consent specific to virtual physiotherapy service delivery, including informing the client of:
 - Any relevant limitations to physiotherapy service options available through virtual care.
 - Safety risks specific to virtual care.
 - Privacy risks specific to virtual care and the method of virtual care delivery.
- Confirms the location of the client and documents the client's location in the client's record for each virtual care interaction.
- Identifies risks related to virtual physiotherapy service provision.
- Employs measures to mitigate risks specific to virtual care.
- Develops patient safety incident management plans specific to the client for potential adverse events considering the physiotherapy services provided virtually and the client's context.
- Discontinues virtual physiotherapy services and refers for in-person service provision when virtual physiotherapy services pose an undue risk to the patient's safety or are ineffective or inappropriate for the patient's condition.

Regarding the provision of virtual care across jurisdictional borders

The physiotherapist:

- Who is providing physiotherapy services virtually to clients in Alberta must be registered with the College of Physiotherapists of Alberta.
- Advises the client of where they are registered and how to contact the regulatory organization in that jurisdiction.
- Is aware of and complies with licensing requirements in the jurisdiction where the client is located, in addition to the physiotherapist's primary or home jurisdiction.

Primary or Home Jurisdiction: refers to the province or territory where the physiotherapist is registered and from which the physiotherapist delivers physiotherapy services.

Virtual Care: is the delivery of physiotherapy services using any technology that enables communication between individuals in different locations, including teleconferencing, video conferencing, email, or text communications.

Related Standards

- Assessment, Diagnosis, Treatment
- Informed Consent
- Risk Management and Safety