

Tug River Health Association strives provide high quality health care to our patients in all ways possible, including the provision of telehealth services.

This policy regards the provision of telehealth services by Tug River Health Association. For the purposes of this policy telehealth services are defined as services rendered to the patient via real-time audio-video communication, or via audio-only (telephone) communication. This policy does not apply to services rendered via text only communication, store and forward type communication. This policy governs the provision of telehealth services by Tug River Health Association providers for services we provide in our current scope of practice. Any specialty services provided via telehealth outside of our scope of practice requires additional policy considerations.

Tug River will maintain a contract with a telehealth provider to allow for HIPPA compliant, secure, reliable, user friendly, real time audio-visual connectivity with patients. Tug River will ensure that all necessary staff are equipped with devices that support the need to provide telehealth services, including but not limited to computers equipped with speakers, microphones, and web cams.

Tug River will make every possible attempt to provide the highest quality care via telehealth that we are able to provide in person, and will utilize telehealth in such a way to expand access to our patients who would otherwise not have access to our services. Telehealth clinical procedures will mirror in-person clinical procedures as closely as possible to maintain this high quality standard. Likewise, Tug River will advocate for further expansion on telehealth services in such a way as will benefit our organization and our patients.

Tug River will place important emphasis on following state and federal regulation regarding the provision of telehealth services, especially with regards to prescribing of controlled substance, and correct billing practices. At the time of the adoption of this policy, such regulations are dictated by [CMS rule/policy reference] and [WV state law and/or DHHS rule/policy reference]. Additionally, Tug River will follow additional FQHC specific telehealth guidance as dictated by HRSA, FTCA, etc.

In accordance with these rules, Tug River will maintain following rules regarding telehealth, and will make exceptions to these rules only when the exceptions still falls within state and federal guidelines and is deemed medically necessary and in the patients best interest by the Tug River provider.

1. In order to be eligible for telehealth appointment, the patient must have had an in-person appointment with a Tug River provider at a credentialed Tug River center within the past 12 months.
2. In order to be eligible for a telehealth appointment, the patient or the patients legal guardian must have provided consent for services including telehealth services within the past 12 months.
3. Patients receiving schedule II narcotic pain reliever prescribed by a Tug River provider must have an in-person appointment every 90 days to allow for the physical exam that is required by WV state law in order for these medications to be prescribed or renewed.
4. Patients must be physically located within the state of WV and at the time of the telehealth visit – exceptions to this rule are HIGHLY discouraged as Tug River risks violating other state laws that we may not be aware of or having one of our providers “practice medicine without a license” in another state.

Unless otherwise noted, the provision of telehealth services at Tug River and by Tug River Providers is subject to the same clinical policies and procedures as in-person services provided by such.