

# NQF Releases Recommendations to Advance Field in Measuring the Quality of Care Provided by Telehealth

*Report emphasizes the need to develop novel measures that assess the quality of care delivered through telehealth.*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, December 1, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A [report](#) from

National Quality Forum's (NQF) Rural Telehealth and Healthcare System Readiness Committee is now available. It outlines a framework and a list of related measures for use to assess the impact that telehealth has on healthcare system readiness and health outcomes during emergencies such as pandemics, natural disasters, mass violence, and other public health events, specifically for rural areas. These measures can be used to guide quality improvement efforts, as well as inform the development of new measures in identified gap areas.

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*Committee Co-Chair Dr.  
William Melms, CMO,  
Marshfield Clinic Health  
System*

Telehealth is an increasingly important component of healthcare delivery, particularly with the COVID-19

pandemic triggering its rapid growth. “The pandemic has changed forever how we deliver care in times of disaster. Our work will provide guidance as to how that care is best delivered,” said Committee Co-Chair Dr. William Melms, Chief Medical Officer, Marshfield Clinic Health System.

Telehealth can also fill a gap in care delivery when access is restricted by geography, specialist availability, or other barriers. “Healthcare services in rural areas are particularly vulnerable during disasters. This work lays out a framework to guide quality and performance improvement for care delivered via telehealth in response to disasters,” said Committee Co-Chair Dr. Marcia Ward, Director, Rural Telehealth Research Center, University of Iowa. Telehealth offers great value to improve access to care by increasing communication channels among clinicians and between patients and clinicians. This delivery modality can enhance quality of care, particularly when increased communication can improve treatment recommendations.

Despite the large expansion of telehealth in America's healthcare delivery system, quality measurement for telehealth is in an early development phase. Standardized, comprehensive

measurement is imperative to inform the leverage of telehealth to enhance care delivery, increase access to care, and achieve positive health outcomes for all. Based on Committee discussions, measurement was suggested in several categories to advance rural telehealth measurement. These include the following five categories: (1) Access to Care and Technology; (2) Costs, Business Models, and Logistics; (3) Experience; (4) Effectiveness; and (5) Equity.

Through literature review and Committee feedback, NQF identified several existing measures that could be adapted to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of telehealth delivery in rural areas, including general process and outcome measures for care. Other specific recommendations from [the report](#) include adapting current measures to assess telehealth with a focus on specialist care, care coordination, and patient experience, as well as developing new measures to assess topics including access to broadband, organizational capacity to shift to telehealth during emergencies, and disparities in care.

This initiative was funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), who contracted NQF to convene the [25-member Committee](#) to guide this work. The Committee included experts in rural healthcare delivery, telehealth research, telemedicine, healthcare policy, critical illness and disease management, health information technology (IT), and caregiver/patient advocacy.

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