

# Telehealth

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Telehealth's role in our increasingly complicated healthcare system is growing rapidly. It's an important category of medical care because it encompasses both preventative and curative aspects. It also benefits patients where access to healthcare is affected by distance or lack of local specialists. This alone makes Telehealth a desirable component of medical care in the Mother Lode Region. Telehealth is an expansion of telemedicine and is the delivery of health-related services and information via telecommunication technologies. A robust, high speed internet signal is required in order to provide full benefit of the services. There are many ways Telehealth is used, ranging from phone conversations between healthcare professionals to robotic surgery between two facilities located in different regions. Physicians commonly use email to communicate with patients, order drug prescriptions and provide other health related services. Other uses include: transmission of images for diagnosis, video conferencing, distance education, patient monitoring, transmission of medical data and many more. In the Mother Lode, visiting nurses commonly provide home health visits and utilize portable computers to record and access patient information. Information is updated, stored and transmitted electronically, often from the patient's home. This improves efficiency and decreases visits to the healthcare facility for the patient and the healthcare provider. Increased access to high speed internet will expand and improve this service. However; added bandwidth (increased internet capacity) will be required as the services expand. Another growing use of Telehealth in the Mother Lode is remote patient monitoring. Information from sensors and monitoring equipment (blood pressure monitors and blood glucose meters) is transmitted to an external monitoring center. With our growing senior population, including those classified as shut ins, remote monitoring aids in patient care and potentially reduces life threatening situations.

Telehealth technologies have already clearly demonstrated their value for reducing hospitalizations and ER visits, while improving the patient outcomes and quality of life.

Healthcare providers in the Mother Lode Region are already utilizing Telehealth programs to varying degrees. However, expansion of services is anticipated and Central Sierra Connect will continue to support and assist our providers by facilitating additional broadband infrastructure, aiding outreach and continuing the push for increased adoption of technology in the Mother Lode Region.

For more information on acquiring or improving Telehealth services in the Mother Lode, please contact Darrell Slocum, Central Sierra Connect Broadband Consortium Outreach Coordinator:

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