

Contracted Telehealth Services

Contracted telehealth services are those products or services that you pay a vendor for on an ongoing basis. These services can be broken up into three specific areas: provider or clinical services, hardware services, and software and hosting services. Depending on the product or products that you are looking at for your telehealth solution, you may encounter all of these elements in the same contracting negotiation with the same vendor.

Telehealth corporations are continuing to build out their service lines with a goal to be your end-to-end telehealth solution. Some telehealth companies have their own provider group(s) as well as hardware and software services. Small telehealth start-ups are being acquired on a regular basis, which can be challenging from a client standpoint. Balancing your budgetary requirements with the services that you're looking for can also be a challenge.

This document will not identify or go into detail on any particular contracted service, it is up to you and your organization to do its due diligence. [The National Telehealth Technology Assessment Resource Center](#) is non-biased in its assessments of telehealth technologies, and may be a good resource for you. [KLAS Research](#) also provides ongoing assessment and research on healthcare technology vendors, of which [telehealth platforms](#) are one of its focus areas. An account is required to view the full KLAS reports, and there are various ways to access them. If you have an existing vendor relationship, you may be able to exchange your vendor experience(s) for access. Paid accounts and access to the reports are also available.

Provider Services

Provider or clinical services are the cognitive/people part of your telehealth solution. For example, if you are interested in implementing a telestroke program, this is the portion of the agreement between your organization and a group of neurologists.

Some questions to consider when you are looking to contract for provider services include: Are provider telehealth services available from a regional partner that you already have a relationship with, or is a well-staffed national provider group the best option for you? Will you be needing them 24/7, or during a certain part of the day when your neurologist is unavailable?

Whichever clinical services you are interested in, it is critical to get clinical buy-in from your organization's medical staff, and to include them in the contracting process to help ensure the success and adoption of the services for your organization.

Hardware Services

Contracted hardware services are typically cart devices that have all of the components necessary for a telehealth visit: monitor, camera, microphone and speaker. The devices that come from vendors are medical-grade and can be appropriately sanitized. They also will have a significant battery life, if being wheeled around a facility for a good portion of the day. Additional peripheral devices can be attached to these devices if a digital stethoscope, otoscope, or other digital device is needed, depending on the type(s) of uses for the cart.

The example above could be used for an ER or inpatient setting, and it can be very beneficial to have a piece of equipment that has been designed and constructed by telehealth companies. The price point for these devices can be significant. This may be justified, depending on the use-case that you need it for.

If you are planning on converting outpatient office visits to telehealth visits, you may only need to outfit your clinician's workstations with webcams and headsets. This solution may look very different from the cart option, but can also be very effective based on this use-case. The webcam-and-headset solution would not be considered a 'contracted hardware solution' since these devices are not proprietary and are typically software-agnostic, which means that they can be used and leveraged for more than one software program. As was mentioned in the Telehealth Overview, it is important to consider your use case when considering hardware options.

Software and Hosting Services

In the past ten years, telehealth companies have pivoted away from wired services and towards cloud-based platforms. This has helped with the expansion of telehealth, and made it more accessible to patients, healthcare providers, and also more affordable. While telehealth used to run on T1 lines and large telemedicine carts that plugged into dedicated ports, telehealth has benefited from innovation, and is now available wherever a strong internet connection and appropriate devices are available.

The hardware services option is often paired with a software and hosting product, since the carts described above are typically deployed in acute, inpatient areas. It can be beneficial to include a hosting option that contractually ensures ongoing monitoring of the device, guaranteed uptime, and on-demand tech support availability.



In the time of COVID, many clinics and providers switched from in-person visits to telehealth visits using their existing staffing resources. In these instances, neither contracted provider services or contracted hardware services are necessary, but you will need some sort of telehealth software platform to provide that live, video connection, to help manage workflow, and also ensure the security and compliance of these visits. When considering a software solution, keep in mind HIPAA and security requirements.



REFERENCES

KLAS Research. Retrieved from <https://klasresearch.com/>

National Telehealth Technology Assessment Resource Center. Retrieved from <https://telehealthtechnology.org/>