

TIP SHEET No.2

Videoconferencing

Practitioners, including clinicians, support workers and peer workers, are responsible for ensuring that the consumer receives a high-quality service through videoconferencing and in accordance with relevant standards and professional and practice guidelines. For example, if you are providing services funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), you will need to adhere to the NDIS Code of Conduct and business rules.

This tip sheet contains issues for you to check during each follow-up videoconferencing session.

Setting up your workspace

A private environment: ensure your session will not be overhead or interrupted, i.e., remind members of your household not to interrupt you or place a 'do not disturb' sign on your closed door, manage possible interruptions from pets.

A professional background: your background should be as neutral as possible, free from clutter or other distractions. Have you cleared away any personal items such as photos or ornaments that you wouldn't want a consumer to see?

Minimise background noise: close windows to traffic noise, adjust the background noise filters of your software, wear noise cancelling headphones, put your phone on silent.

Camera positioned appropriately: your camera should be positioned to maximise the sense of 'eye contact' with the consumer.

Appropriate framing: try to ensure your face is centred in the frame and that no part of your face is 'cut off' from view, as this could be distracting.

Appropriate lighting: ensure your face is visible and that you are not back-lit. If you will be videoconferencing regularly, you may wish to consider blinds or other filters on the windows or dimmer switch lighting.

Professional personal presentation: you should be dressed professionally, as if you were meeting the consumer in person. Consider how what you wear may be distracting on screen. It may be helpful to wear neutral colours, or colours that contrast with your background.

Setting up your digital space

You have checked for any pending software updates or system updates that may slow your computer or may require a sudden restart.

You have checked your internet speed is sufficient and you have a back-up plan in case of disconnection.

You are confident in using the videoconferencing software.

You have shut down other web browsers and programs.

You have disabled any notifications during the session that may be distracting, i.e., email alerts. Consider whether it's helpful to disable the video of yourself or whether it will help your practice to be able to monitor your own expressions.

You have prepared resources you will need in an easy to access folder or bookmark browsers.

Preparing for screen-sharing: Clear your desktop of personal or confidential information. If possible, you could set up more than one screen and only share the screen without personal or confidential information with the consumer.



You have checked your internet speed is sufficient and you have a back-up plan in case of disconnection.

Your internet connection is secure and your anti-virus/malware software up to date

Preparing your client

You should have already gained the consumer's informed consent for digital service delivery. Check if you have prepared the consumer in the following ways:

You have previously helped the consumer to set up for videoconferencing, i.e., by discussing issues listed in the Consumer Checklist.

At the beginning of each session, always check the consumer can see and hear you properly.

Check that your client will be able to maintain privacy during the session and ask them to switch their phone to silent or off.

Ask that your client put their pets in another space if they are likely to distract the session.

You have managed the consumer's expectations of the session and discussed responsibilities, i.e., whether the session will be recorded, or that you may take notes or share resources.

You have discussed a back-up plan in case of technological failure: i.e., a mobile or landline to call, or alternative videoconferencing platform. If your back-up plan is to call using a social media platform, check this is consistent with your organisation's social media policy.

You have discussed a back-up plan in case of other emergencies: i.e., in case you need to send for assistance, you have the consumer's current contact details, the address they are connecting from, details of their mental health practitioners and/or general practitioner, and details of any nominated or primary carers, or emergency contacts.

Adapting your practice skills

You can ensure that the consumer has the same quality of experience through a video session as when you see them in person by considering the following reminders:

Positioning and posture: Check your image to adjust your posture and position to better communicate engagement. For example, you may wish to sit lean forward slightly.

Make eye contact with the camera: consider the balance between looking into the camera so your client feels you are making eye contact and looking at the consumer's face so you can read their social cues. Consider also whether the consumer is comfortable with making eye contact with you and adjust your expectations accordingly. For example, they may have personal preferences for not wanting to show themselves on video.

Emphasise your active listening skills: nonverbal signals normally used to build rapport may be less noticeable to the consumer over video. Try to use active listening skills such as nodding, engaged facial expressions, gestures (where your hands are visible on screen), paraphrasing or making empathic statements.

Check how the session is going: Checking in with the consumer every now and then about the session gives them the opportunity to provide feedback, but also shows you care about the quality of their experience. You can check in at the beginning of the session or during transitions in conversations.

Maintain a trauma-informed recovery approach: Some clients may find videoconferencing very uncomfortable. Discuss with them what might help them feel comfortable and safe, and what the options are.

Taking notes with care: Your client will be able to tell if you are taking notes on your computer during the session. You can try to minimise the disruption by explaining that you will be taking notes, typing quietly or using a headset, and trying to maintain eye contact as much as possible.

Screen sharing or whiteboard functions can be used for making notes together with the consumer, such as a session agenda or key points. If the consumer has the required digital competency, this can be a great way to work together.

Self-care plan

Have you allowed yourself sometime between sessions (i.e., at least 5-10 minutes) to write case notes, stretch and prepare for your next session or meeting?

If you facilitate group sessions, you may well need longer gaps between sessions.

Do you have a self-care plan? Does the self-care plan address eye strain, fatigue and back strain?

Do you have opportunities to de-brief with colleagues or a manager? Do you have time for self-reflective practice journaling as part of your professional practice? Consider discussing these matters with your line manager if you feel under additional pressure working in a digital environment very different from what you have been used to.

Further resources

- Agency for Clinical Innovation provides [virtual care resources](#) for clinicians and their clients.

