



Guide to International Telehealth and Virtual Care (TVC) standards

In 2025 one global standard for the quality planning from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) was current. Additionally a joint World Health organization (WHO) / International Telecommunications Union (ITU) standard on accessibility considerations and seven general guidelines was current.

International Standards

1. International Organisation for Standardization: *ISO 13131:2021 Health Informatics Telehealth services quality planning guidelines* (1). This standard provides processes that can be used to analyse the risks to the quality and safety of healthcare and continuity of care when telehealth services are used to support healthcare activities. Using risk management processes, quality objectives and procedures are derived which provide guidelines for telehealth services.
2. Recommendation ITU-T *F.780.2 Accessibility of telehealth services* (2) defines accessibility requirements for technical features to be used and implemented by governments, health-care providers and manufacturers of telehealth platforms to facilitate the access and use of telehealth services by persons with disabilities and specific needs, including older persons with age-related disabilities. It is supported by a WHO Implementation toolkit for accessible telehealth services.

International guidance

1. Published in 2024 by WHO Europe, *Telehealth quality of care tool* (3) is intended to be used by Member States or by individual health-care provider organizations and aims to stimulate reflection and action, helping countries and health-care organizations on their journey to mature, safe and high-quality telehealth service provision.
2. Intended for policy makers, this WHO *Support tool to strengthen telemedicine* (4) aims to strengthen telemedicine by helping leaders, managers, policy-makers and other telemedicine stakeholders to self-assess their telemedicine context, and design and optimize telemedicine services based on the best available global evidence.
3. In 2022 WHO published the Consolidated *telemedicine implementation guide* (5) aimed at governments and provides a comprehensive overview of the key planning, implementation and maintenance processes to inform a costed investment plan and support countries across different stages in their telemedicine journey.
4. The UNICEF *Guide to Telemedicine in Primary Healthcare* (6) from 2022 is designed to help professionals in the primary care team to organize telemedicine services including both the family doctor and nurses. The guide may also be useful for other professions providing health-related services (psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, pharmacists or social workers).
5. In 2022 the World Medical Association published a *Statement on Digital Health* (7) addressing physicians use of digital technologies and their role in the health care setting.
6. The Pan American Health Organization *Framework for the Implementation of a Telemedicine Service* (8) published in 2016 aims to provide solutions for the successful implementation of telemedicine services (and eHealth, in general) in the health care setting.
7. For digital health services more broadly, the WHO: *Digital Implementation Investment Guide* (9) and the *Recommendations on digital interventions for health system strengthening* (10) published in 2018 and 2020, provide processes for countries to develop a costed implementation plan for digital health to ensure investments are needs-based and contribute effective and interoperable systems aligned with national



digital architecture, country readiness, health system and policy goals.

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Note: There are many other related standards for TVC services including device “apps”, interoperability of electronic medical devices, medical record systems and information used by TVC services which are not considered in this short guide.

This is Guide #1 to Telehealth and Virtual Care services in the series of guides produced by the Telehealth Working Group of the International Medical Informatics Association. These guides are published on the website www.telehealthguidance.org