Digital Health for Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Care

Patient Handout

CALIFORNIA TELEHEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

Part of OCHIN

2026

© CTRC 2026

The California Telehealth Resource Center (CTRC), and resources and activities produced or supported by the CTRC, are made possible by grant number GA5RH37469 from the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, Health Resources and Services Administration, DHHS. The information or content and conclusions herein are those of the CTRC. They should not be construed as the official position or policy of HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government. No official endorsements of any kind, by any of these entities, should be inferred.

Table of Contents

About CTRC	1
Using Digital Health to Support Your Recovery Journey	2
Access	3
Safety	3
Privacy	4
Sustainability	5
Recovery Support	5
Questions to Ask Your Care Team	6
Helpful Reminder	6
References	7

CTRC© 2026

ABOUT CTRC

The California Telehealth Resource Center (CTRC) offers no-cost, unbiased training, educational resources, and technical assistance to help California providers and patients get the most from telehealth. As the federally designated telehealth resource center for the region, we offer unbiased tools and services based upon proven telehealth practices. We create lasting change and improvement by focusing on implementation, sustainability, reimbursement and policy, integration, workflows, and patient/provider adoption.

As part of the National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers and the OCHIN family of companies, CTRC assists thousands of providers and patients annually. We have extensive experience supporting the healthcare safety net, rural and urban providers, and patients and families throughout California who would otherwise be unable to access quality healthcare due to geographic isolation, language/cultural barriers, lack of insurance, disability, homelessness, and more.

CTRC© 2026

Using Digital Health to Support Your Recovery Journey

If you are receiving care for opioid use disorder (OUD) or another substance use disorder (SUD), digital health services may help you connect with your healthcare team more easily and more often.

Digital health includes telehealth visits, phone visits, secure messaging, remote monitoring, and other tools that help patients stay connected to care. These services can make it easier to access treatment, ask questions, receive support, and stay engaged in recovery.

This guide explains what digital health is, how it can support your care, and what you can do to make the most of your healthcare visits.

The Five Pillars of Digital Health:

1. **Access**
   Helping patients receive care when and where they need it.
2. **Safety**
   Making sure patients receive high-quality care and know what to do
3. **Privacy**
   Protecting personal health information and respecting confidentiality.
4. **Sustainability**
   Helping patients stay connected to care over time.
5. **Recovery Support**
   Connecting patients with resources that support long-term recovery and wellness.

CTRC© 2026

Access

Understanding Your Care Options

Your healthcare team may offer different ways to receive care.

In-Person Visits	You meet with your provider in a clinic or healthcare facility.
Video Visits	You meet with your provider using a smartphone, tablet, or computer with internet access.
Phone Visits	You speak with your provider over the phone when video is unavailable or not appropriate.
Secure Messaging	You may be able to communicate with your care team through a secure patient portal or approved messaging platform.

Safety

Getting the Care You Need

Digital health can make it easier to access care, but it is important to understand when additional help may be needed.

Ask your provider:

- Who should I contact if I have questions about my treatment?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of medication?
- What should I do if I feel worse?
- How do I access help after clinic hours?

If you receive medication for opioid use disorder, make sure you understand:

- How to take your medication
- How refills work
- Possible side effects
- When to contact your healthcare team

Never stop taking prescribed medication without speaking to your provider.

CTRC© 2026

When to Get Emergency Help

Digital health services are not emergency services.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department immediately if:

- Someone may be experiencing an overdose
- You have trouble breathing
- You experience chest pain
- You feel unsafe
- You have thoughts of harming yourself or others
- You are experiencing a medical emergency

If your situation is not an emergency but your symptoms are worsening, contact your healthcare team as soon as possible.

Privacy

Protecting Your Information

Your healthcare information should be protected whether care is delivered in person or through digital health services.

Consider asking:

- How is my information protected?
- Who can access my records?
- How are substance use treatment records handled?
- How will the clinic contact me?
- Can I choose how messages are sent to me?

For your privacy, try to:

- Participate in visits from a private location whenever possible
- Use headphones if others are nearby
- Keep passwords secure
- Log out of shared devices after appointments

Protecting privacy helps build trust between patients and healthcare teams.

CTRC© 2026

Sustainability

Staying Connected to Care

Recovery often involves ongoing appointments, follow-up visits, and support from multiple providers.

Digital health can help make care more convenient by reducing:

- Travel time
- Transportation challenges
- Missed work or school
- Scheduling difficulties

To get the most from digital health services:

Prepare for Appointments
Before your visit:

- Charge your device
- Test your internet connection if using video
- Write down questions you want to ask
- Have a list of medications available

Ask for Help
Tell your healthcare team if you need:

- Language interpretation
- Closed captioning
- Assistance using technology
- Alternative communication options

Your healthcare team wants to help you stay connected to care.

Recovery Support

Building Your Support Network

Recovery is about more than appointments and medications.

Many people benefit from additional support services such as:

- Peer recovery programs
- Counseling services
- Behavioral health treatment
- Harm reduction programs
- Support groups
- Housing assistance
- Transportation resources
- Community organizations

CTRC© 2026

Ask your healthcare team what resources are available in your community. Strong support networks can help you stay engaged in treatment and recovery.

Questions to Ask Your Care Team

Consider asking you care team:

About Your Care	• What treatment options are available to me? • What type of visits are best for my situation? • How often should I follow up?
About Medications	• How do I take this medication? • What should I do if I miss a dose? • How do refills work?
About Privacy	• Who can see my information? • How is my information protected?
About Recovery Support	• Are peer support services available? • Are there counseling or support groups nearby? • What community resources might help me?

Helpful Reminder

Recovery is a process, and support is available every step of the way.

Digital health can help you:

- Stay connected to care
- Access treatment more easily
- Communicate with your healthcare team
- Receive support when challenges arise
- Build a stronger recovery support network

CTRC© 2026

References

California Department of Health Care Services. (2024). *Behavioral health services and resources*. Behavioral Health Transformation | DHCS

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Drug overdose prevention*. Overdose Prevention | CDC

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). *Telehealth for the treatment of serious mental illness and substance use disorders*. Telehealth for the Treatment of Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders | SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). *Treatment Options for Substance Use Disorder*. Treatment Options for Substance Use Disorder | SAMHSA

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Know your rights: Protecting your health information*. https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (2024). *Get help*. https://988lifeline.org

CTRC© 2026

CTRC© 2026