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Australian STANDARD®

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Health informatics — Provision of guidance for users of a telehealth or virtual care service



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Australian Digital Health Agency
Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
Australian Information Industry Association
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This page explains the meaning of the language and structure of this Standard.

Refer to Standards Australia's Standardisation Guide 006 for more details about drafting rules.

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Requirements

To conform to a Standard, all requirements in the Standard need to be met.

A requirement is any statement in the Standard which uses the word "shall".

Recommendations, permissions and possibilities

The following words are commonly used in Standards, but statements using them do not have to be followed to conform to the Standard:

(a) "should" means that something is recommended.

(b) "may" means that something is permitted.

(c) "can" means that something is possible.

Structure of Standards

A Standard always has the following parts:

(i) The Preface states who developed the Standard, what the Standard is aiming to do, and how it relates to other documents.

(ii) The Scope states what the Standard is about, what it covers and what it does not cover.

(iii) The Normative references clause lists other documents that are referenced in the Standard as part of requirements.

(iv) The Terms and definitions clause defines important terms to help with understanding the Standard.

A Standard may also include other parts, such as the following:

(1) A normative appendix sets additional requirements that need to be conformed to.

(2) An informative appendix provides additional information or guidance. They usually do not contain requirements. If an informative appendix does contain requirements, the Standard will explain when those requirements apply.

(3) A Bibliography lists documents referenced in the Standard but not as part of requirements.

Many Standards include notes. Notes provide recommendations and/or guidance only. They never contain requirements.

Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Technical Committee IT-014, Health Informatics.

The objective of this document is to specify requirements and recommendations on the telehealth and virtual care (TVC) guidance made available by a care provider about care delivered at a distance by means of telehealth or virtual care services and about how to access care via these services.

This document contains provisions relating to the availability and currency of TVC guidance, the content of TVC guidance and the process of producing and maintaining TVC guidance.

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Introduction

Telehealth and virtual care are terms used for both having a consultation with a healthcare provider using video or phone and, more broadly, to synchronous or asynchronous provision of health care using information and communications technology, also referred to as virtual care.

The monumental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 dramatically advanced telehealth, with rapid dismantling of financial barriers for provision of service by expanding the Australian Medicare Benefit Scheme items and later making telehealth items permanent.

These changes underpinned a more widespread adoption of virtual consultations, including telephone, video conversation or recording, or an interactive form on a web page. Many general practitioners, specialists, public and private healthcare providers now offer a telehealth and virtual care service as an option to patients.

The ability of a TVC service provider to communicate and distribute information to care recipients, other users and potential users about the nature of the TVC service, including who can use it, how to access it and any other factors, is integral to the design of a TVC service. In this document, such information is referred to as “TVC guidance”.

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Section 1 Scope and general

1.1 Scope

This document specifies requirements and makes recommendations on the telehealth and virtual care (TVC) guidance made available by a care provider about care delivered at a distance by means of telehealth or virtual care services and about how to access care via these services.

This document includes provisions relating to the availability and currency of TVC guidance, the content of TVC guidance and the process of producing and maintaining TVC guidance.

This document includes requirements and recommendations for the TVC guidance regarding the —

(a) availability and currency of the service;

(b) content of the TVC guidance, including —

  (i) its description;

  (ii) eligibility to use the services;

  (iii) accessing the service;

  (iv) how to use the service;

  (v) managing emergency situations; and

  (vi) options for feedback and complaint;

(c) how personal information and privacy is managed;

(d) using a TVC service; and

(e) developing TVC guidance.

This document does not prescribe other processes or policies for the delivery of TVC services.

1.2 Application

This document is intended to assist TVC service providers in developing and providing TVC guidance for users and care recipients of TVC services across a range of formats and communications channels.

This document can be read in conjunction with AS ISO 13131, which provides guidelines for organizations designing, implementing and operating telehealth services.

NOTE When TVC services are provided in specific clinical areas, other organizations might have produced relevant clinical guidance or standards applicable to the delivery of these TVC services so that health care is not compromised.

1.3 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

NOTE Documents referenced for informative purposes are listed in the Bibliography.

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