



Virtual Visits Verification: Frequently asked Questions

(Updated November 4, 2020)

In support of the province's Digital First for Health strategy, Ontario Health is establishing a provincial standard for virtual care solutions and launching a verification process to assess the alignment of solutions to these.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, OntarioMD, and other health care stakeholders, Ontario Health has developed virtual visit video and secure messaging requirements designed for solutions to support clinical encounters with patients and interoperable health information exchange.

For additional questions about virtual visits verification, please contact Verification@ontariohealth.ca.

FAQs for Health Service Providers & Organizations

1. What is a virtual visit?

A: For purposes of this standard, a virtual visit is defined as a digital interaction where one or more clinicians, including physicians, nurses, or allied health, provide health care services to a patient or their caregiver.

An example of a virtual visit is as follows: A specialist performs a post-surgical follow-up assessment of a patient during a video visit previously scheduled by phone. The specialist asks the patient questions about their recovery and visually inspects the surgical site for signs of infection. The specialist documents the visit in a Hospital Information System (HIS).

2. Which technologies are used to deliver virtual visits?

A: Virtual visits can be delivered to patients using videoconferencing and secure messaging solutions. A video visit (videoconferencing) involves a real-time encounter between one or more health care providers and a patient. Secure messaging is an asynchronous, written clinical encounter, typically without any visual input (except for optional image attachments), accessible by patients via a web browser or mobile application.

3. Does using a verified or non-verified solution impact my ability to bill for virtual care services?

A: It is expected that the virtual visits verification process will be leveraged by the Ontario Virtual Care Program (provider eligibility requirements will be applicable and will be announced by the ministry) and other ministry programs. Further information will be released by the ministry in the coming weeks. Unless otherwise notified by the ministry, please continue with current billing practices that align with ministry guidance. For billing related inquiries, please contact the Service Support Contact Centre at SSContactCentre.MOH@ontario.ca or 1-800-262-6524.



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4. What is the Verification process for?

A: The purpose of the Virtual Visits Solution standard and verification process is to ensure that virtual visit solutions meet the provincial standards, and that virtual visits between patients and providers are safe and secure, with patient privacy protected.

5. When will the list of verified virtual visit solutions be available from Ontario Health?

A: Ontario Health will launch the verification process and accept vendor submission packages in late November. Any virtual visit solution vendor is eligible to submit an application package to be verified, and all applications will be reviewed on a first come, first served basis. The published list is expected to include verified solutions as early as December and expand as submissions are received and reviewed. Please check back to otn.ca/verified-solutions to see updated lists of solutions that have been verified.

6. How will I benefit from Virtual Visit standards and the verification process?

A: The list of verified solutions will provide you with guidance on whether your existing virtual visit solution meets provincial standards, or if you are interested in procuring or using a virtual visit solution other than Ontario Health video solutions through OTNhub, you may use the verified list of solutions to guide you.

Health Service Providers using a verified virtual visit solution will benefit through:

- Confidence in virtual care solutions that meet provincial privacy, security, interoperability, and technical requirements
- Safeguarding of patient Personal Health Information (PHI)
- Billing eligibility through the Ontario Virtual Care Program (*provider eligibility requirements will be applicable and will be announced by the ministry*)
- Opportunities for provincial program funding





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7. My current virtual visit solution is not on the verified list. What do I need to do?

A: You should encourage your vendor to visit otn.ca/verification to learn about the verification process and submit its solution for verification. Vendors are also welcome to contact Ontario Health at Verification@ontariohealth.ca.

8. How will the verification process affect or benefit my acquisition of virtual visit solutions?

A: The verified solutions list is meant to serve only as a guide for clinicians and health care organizations in selecting and procuring approved virtual care solutions. Clinicians and health care organizations should continue to make their own independent decisions about any vendors chosen to provide solutions including conducting their own due diligence regarding vendors' and its associated solution's compliance with applicable laws.

9. Do I, as a physician or health care provider, need to conduct my own privacy & security assessments of virtual visit solutions during procurements, if this is already part of the verification process?

A: Yes. Through the verification process, health care providers will see a list of verified solutions which will indicate the current status of a vendor solution, including: that have either self-attested to meeting, or have been validated by Ontario Health as meeting, mandatory privacy & security virtual visits requirements that are key to providing patients with safe, interoperable virtual visits.

Ontario Health does not conduct a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) or a Threat & Risk Assessment (TRA) as part of the verification process, however, vendors are required to submit a summary of and table of content for its PIA & TRA conducted within the previous 2 years. Health care providers should make independent decisions about privacy and security risks by conducting their own due diligence regarding vendors' and its associated solution's compliance with local organizational policy, applicable laws, and patient information safeguards.

10. In my role as health care provider, what else should I consider in order to deliver virtual visits to my patients?

A: It is important for health care providers to understand and follow their respective college guidelines in the delivery of virtual care. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) and the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) have developed guidance for its members on aspects of virtual care. Other professional organizations and regulatory colleges,





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including the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, the Ontario Psychological Association, and the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators offer similar guidance for its members. Further, nothing contained in the process is intended as legal advice; health care providers should seek independent counsel and legal advice as required.

For more information, please visit or visit our website at: otn.ca/verified-solutions.





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FAQs for Vendors

1. When will the verification process begin?
 - A. Ontario Health expects to open the verification process in late November 2020. Please visit otn.ca/verification for the most up-to-date information on the process.
2. What should vendors prepare in advance of November?
 - A. In order to become verified, vendors must attest that its solution meets all mandatory requirements as specified. Vendors are encouraged to become familiar with the requirements. In the process, vendors will be required to submit up-to-date summaries of its Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) and Threat Risk Assessment (TRA) conducted within the previous two years as part of the first stage of verification. Summaries must include a table of content of the PIA/TRA.
3. How long will the verification process take?
 - A. Submissions will be processed on a first come, first served basis. Vendors should anticipate receiving a notice of verification status within weeks of submitting. Turnaround times will be dependent upon the volume of applications received.
4. What does the verification process entail?
 - A. There are 2 phases in the verification process:
 1. Attestation
 - Based on the template provided, vendors will complete the submission, including attestation (the "Submission") and submit this to Ontario Health.
 - Ontario Health expects to open this stage of the verification process in late November 2020.
 - The Submission will be complete with all mandatory business and solution information as required and signed by the CEO, or other individual who holds the authority to bind the organization.
 - Completion and provision of the Submission will mean vendor acknowledgement and acceptance of the verification process terms, conditions, disclaimers, and solution requirements.
 - In the Submission, vendors should expect to demonstrate its solution's privacy and security safeguards and functionality – note Section 2.0 of the Virtual Visits Solution Requirements.





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- Ontario Health will review the Submission and follow up with the vendor as necessary for clarity, missing information or to coordinate validation.
- Passing the Attestation step will allow vendors to progress to the validation step; otherwise the Submission or solution gaps will be identified, allowing vendors to remediate its Submission and/or solutions to comply with requirements and to return to the process at a future point. Attestation will be required on a yearly basis and any solution changes that may impact privacy or security may require a renewal of PIA and TRA summaries. PIAs and TRAs must also be updated every 3 years.

2. Validation

- After attestation has been successfully completed, solutions will undergo validation testing by Ontario Health.
- This step may be undertaken immediately after Attestation or may be scheduled for a later point, but no later than 1 year after the submission of the Attestation.
- Vendors should expect to make its solutions (and team) available to enable Ontario Health testing.
- Vendor should expect to conduct demonstrations of its solution's compliance to selected mandatory requirements through test scenarios provided by Ontario Health.
- Passing the Validation step will allow Ontario Health to recommend 'verified' status for the solution, to be published on the public Ontario Health verified solutions website for the benefit of health care providers and organizations.
- Otherwise vendors will be advised of deficiencies to inform remediation of its solutions to comply with requirements and a return to the Verification process at a future point.

5. How do vendors apply to be verified?

- A. Details, including a How-To Guide, will be published at otn.ca/verification when the program launches in November 2020. Vendors are encouraged to visit the site to keep up-to date on the latest information, in addition to otn.ca/newsroom where Ministry of Health INFOBulletins related to virtual care are re-published.

6. Are there any fees associated with providing a submission to the verification process?

- A. No, there are no fees associated with the provision of a Submission. That said, vendors are responsible at all times for all costs associated with ensuring that its solution and services meet the mandatory solution requirements expected of verified solutions.

7. Is there a window that vendors must complete their submission by to enter this process?





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- A. No. Vendors will be able to apply for verification on an ongoing basis. Once the process is available, the Submission can be completed within any timeframe and submitted to Ontario Health via: Verification@ontariohealth.ca. While there is no prescribed timeframe for the provisions of a Submission, Ontario Health may, at any time without notice or liability, and for any reason whatsoever, terminate, change, suspend or discontinue any aspect of the process.
8. What does it mean for solutions to become verified?
- A. All vendors are required to attest to meeting a set of mandatory virtual visit solution requirements in the form of an attestation. Solutions will then undergo testing to (as determined by Ontario Health) to validate it meets selected mandatory requirements under the provincial standard. Unique solutions will be verified – some vendors will offer more than one solution (product) and thus will be required to verify each through this process. Solutions may be integrated into different EMR or HIS platforms or may be used by health service providers on a stand-alone (non-integrated) basis.
9. Does a unique instance of a solution constitute a unique solution/product for which vendors need to gain verification status?
- A. It depends. Ontario Health is looking for commercially available solutions, major release versions, and comments on how solutions are deployed. If the solution is distinguishably customized for a given customer, then it would be a separate product. Vendors should contact Ontario Health before submitting to the process to be sure the parties are aligned on how a product is categorized.
10. What happens when a vendor is approved?
- A. Ontario Health will issue the solution vendor a notice of approval for solutions that meet all mandatory requirements. The solution name will be published on OTN.ca for ease of reference for health care providers and organizations exploring their virtual care solutions options.
11. Are both video and secure messaging modalities approved to be used by health care providers as part of provincial virtual care programs?
- A. This process will verify solutions for video and/or secure messaging and will publish verified solutions on otn.ca. Currently only video is an approved virtual visit solution under the Ontario Virtual Care Program.





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12. If a solution has been successfully verified can it be procured by any buyer in the province?
 - A. While any verified solution may be procured, verification does not replace procurement. For clarity, health care providers (buyers) are required to procure solutions following the government procurement requirements applicable to the health care provider.
13. What happens if a vendor is not approved?
 - A. Vendors that do not meet all mandatory requirements, or do not fully complete the registration package, will be notified and invited to re-submit when ready.
14. What happens if Ontario Health determines that a solution that has been previously verified with Ontario Health is not compliant?
 - A. Ontario Health will contact the vendor and a timeline will be established and agreed upon to ensure that vendors have a reasonable period of time to remediate any given gap. Where a vendor fails to remediate, eligibility as a verified solution may be cancelled and the vendor solution de-verified.
15. Do vendors need to notify Ontario Health if changes are made to its software/platform? What sort of changes would warrant such a notification?
 - A. It is a vendor's responsibility to submit a change notice for any system change that may affect its ability to meet mandatory requirement as specified in the [Virtual Visits Solution Requirements](#). Vendors are not expected to notify Ontario Health of minor changes that do not impact its ability to meet mandatory requirements. A change notice form will be included as part of the submission package. For greater clarity a change notice should be submitted for any organizational or system change that may impact how personal health information (PHI) is handled or protected. The change notice may require the vendor to conduct a delta or refreshed PIA and/or TRA and submit a revised PIA/TRA summary to Ontario Health.
16. I have an OntarioMD-certified EMR Offering, do I need to be verified by Ontario Health to be recognized as a verified Virtual Visit Solution?
 - A. The Ontario Health Virtual Visits Verification Program focuses on the set of Virtual Visit Solution Requirements in the provincial standard which are agnostic of the solution type (i.e. not specific to EMRs, HIS, etc.). A vendor's product will be required to meet the set of mandatory





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requirements identified in the standard/specification. At this time there is no reciprocity between OntarioMD's EMR Certification and Ontario Health's Verification Program.

17. How can vendors ask questions?

- A. Vendors are encouraged to email Verification@ontariohealth.ca to submit questions. Ontario Health will respond to all vendor questions by updating the FAQs and will periodically republish these on otn.ca/verification.

18. Is this verification process mandatory for virtual visit solutions?

- A. The verification process is voluntary. However, vendors should be aware, and take into consideration, that the process will be leveraged by the Ontario Virtual Care Program and other ministry programs.

19. Will clinicians and health care organizations be required to only use verified solutions?

- A. Ontario is moving toward a standards-based approach for evaluating virtual visit solutions so that providers and patients can be confident that the virtual visit solutions they use meet mandatory requirements for Virtual Visits established by Ontario Health. It is expected that the virtual visits verification process will be leveraged by the Ontario Virtual Care Program and other ministry programs. This FAQ will be updated when further information is released by the ministry.

20. Will the requirements change?

- A. Yes. Ontario Health expects the provincial standard will evolve over time as virtual visit solutions mature. Vendors will be advised of future updates. Ontario Health will publish updated versions of the solution requirements on otn.ca/verification. Verified vendors will be notified of changes made to the requirements to which it has already attested to meeting. Where a requirement has changed and a solution vendor is no longer able to attest to meeting that requirement, a remediation process will be initiated to ensure that the vendor has ample notice and sufficient time to meet the updated version of the requirements.

For more information, please visit or visit our website at: otn.ca/verification.

