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## INTRODUCTION

The OTN Membership Agreement outlines the need for Members to assign a resource (Telemedicine Coordinator) to support the delivery of telemedicine services within their organization. It is a common belief that telemedicine programs need to have position descriptions that clearly define roles and responsibilities; but that the diversity of telemedicine programs and their unique role in each organization require flexibility in those position descriptions (National Initiative for Telemedicine, Framework of Guidelines, 2003, p. 43).

As outlined in the OTN Membership Agreement:

*The Member shall designate a Telemedicine Coordinator who shall act as the primary OTN contact and will dedicate the appropriate amount of time required to fulfill this role. The role may be shared amongst more than one individual (OTN Membership Agreement, Appendix A).*

## GUIDELINE

OTN recognizes that each Member's approach to Telemedicine will reflect their unique service delivery. OTN has developed a Telemedicine Staffing Requirements Guideline to facilitate the development of this role at your organization. The Guideline can be used to inform the development of Member job descriptions for telemedicine specific roles and responsibilities.

The Guideline also suggests the personal attributes and knowledge/experience that would be valuable for a Telemedicine Coordinator to possess to advance a telemedicine program within an organization.

To facilitate the delivery of high quality telemedicine services within an organization, OTN recommends that Members take the time to analyze their organizational telemedicine services or programs (clinical, educational and/or administrative) and use this Guideline to develop their Telemedicine position(s).

### Roles and Staffing Requirements for Telemedicine

Depending on organizational size and human resource complexity, members have options to consider when supporting telemedicine activities.

The three primary roles and their major responsibilities are:

1. Telemedicine Coordinator - Non-Clinical TMC:
  - Serves as the primary contact person with OTN;
  - Supports non-clinical (educational and administrative) videoconferencing activity, including scheduling and providing education to others regarding telemedicine.

Note:

- Non-clinical activity does not require that the TMC to be a regulated health care professional;
- The TMC position should have a back-up to cover vacation and sick time.

## 2. Telemedicine Coordinator – Clinical TMC:

- Licensed and registered with his/her respective professional regulatory healthcare college;
- Completed the OTN Clinical Telemedicine Certification Program;
- The majority of OTN members participating in clinical telemedicine appoint a Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse in this role;
- The College of Nurses of Ontario’s Telepractice Practice Guideline indicates that nurses facilitating telemedicine consultations “must possess current and in-depth knowledge in the clinical care(s) relevant to the role.”

Note:

- OTN provides formal training specific to the technology and associated processes used to facilitate safe and ethical care during the virtual clinical visits.

## 3. Technical Contact

- Oversees technical matters related to the technical network and infrastructure;
- Does not generally operate the equipment or participate in day-to-day operations.

Note:

- Some Members do not have technical expertise on staff and the TMC may serve as the technical contact by default.

### **General Considerations for Staffing**

A strategic telemedicine plan outlining the type of telemedicine activities (clinical, education, administrative) that an organization will be participating in should be in place prior to determining staffing requirements. This will help to ensure that the staffing model aligns with operational needs of the Telemedicine Program.

### **Considerations for Recruitment of Telemedicine Staff**

The role of the TMC is to ensure delivery of high quality telemedicine services within your organization.

Experience within the health care setting as well as the flexibility to respond to a fluctuating workload and changing environment are important qualities for a TMC and will contribute to the overall success of your program.

The following characteristics are recommended:

- Attributes, Skills, Knowledge, Experience
  - Self-starter with an entrepreneurial spirit comfortable working in a rapidly changing environment
  - Collaborative
  - Comfortable working within the healthcare environment and with health care partners
  - Skilled communicator
  - Interest in application of technology in health care environment
  - Ability to advocate for the integration of telemedicine across the organization
  - Excellent interpersonal skills
  - Strong communication skills, verbal, presentation and writing
  - Innovative with the ability to problem solve quickly, strategically, and creatively
  - Superior organizational skills and ability to set priorities
  - Experience working with physicians and other healthcare professionals
  - Basic understanding of the field of telemedicine, or a willingness to learn
  - Basic computer skills

## ● Roles and Responsibilities

- Telemedicine Service and Program Development:
  - Support the telemedicine program including supporting clinical events within the organization
  - Advocate for, and contribute to, the establishment of organizational structures and resources to support the development of Telemedicine in keeping with the direction and priorities of the organization
  - Develop processes and protocols for effective Telemedicine clinical consultations.
  - These will need to be developed and continually revised in collaboration with physicians and Allied Health Care
  - Professionals both internally and externally
  - Promote Telemedicine to healthcare professionals, patients and the community
  - Field queries regarding organizational telemedicine services

Maintain current knowledge base with respect to the field of telemedicine and incorporate national and/or provincial Telemedicine resources to organization specific process.

## ● Operational Functions

- Serve as an organizational point-of-contact for telemedicine:
- Responsible for the delivery of high quality telemedicine services within the organization
- Observe organizational obligations with respect to Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) in all telemedicine activity
- Train/mentor others in the organization on telemedicine processes and technology (as required)
- Develop internal organizational telemedicine policies and procedures (as required)
- Develop expertise in the use and care of the equipment
- Prepare space for telemedicine events
- Troubleshoot minor technical problems
- Prepare/oversee internal organizational requirements for telemedicine activity statistics and reporting

## ● OTN Member Obligations:

- Serve as a liaison/point-of-contact with OTN
- Participate in OTN training sessions (as necessary)
- Participate in OTN site readiness assessments
- Schedule use of the network through OTN's scheduling service; resolve scheduling conflicts
- Attend and participate in OTN Regional meetings including Community of Practice events
- Comply with technical service standards as set out in the OTN Technical Service Level Agreement (TSLA)
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of OTN Policies and Procedures, abide by such, and ensure awareness of by other telemedicine users
- Receive communiqués from OTN re: updates for network, policies, contact information, etc. and disseminate internally (as necessary)
- Participate in OTN new site/new system set-up process (as required)
- Discuss new opportunities for telemedicine services with OTN Regional staff

	Clinical	Educational	Administrative
<b>Additional Skills, Knowledge, Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity in the development of clinical services, clinical policies/procedures and clinical workflow processes</li> <li>• Understanding of organizational policies, procedures and protocols relevant to the provision of clinical services</li> <li>• Understanding of organizational systems and associated departments required to support clinical services</li> <li>• When performing direct patient care activity, health professionals in telemedicine (as in all other clinical areas) must be fully licensed and registered with their respective regulatory/licensing body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with adult education learning principles, practices, and resources</li> <li>• Comfortable with different educational delivery methods that use technology</li> <li>• Comfortable with educational technologies (computer, Internet, webcasting, videoconferencing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with processes for organizing and conducting meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<p><b>Service Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with healthcare providers and/or patients in the region to identify needs for clinical services</li> <li>• Field queries from internal sources re: clinical service opportunities</li> <li>• Coordinate and/or participate in internal stakeholder meetings to develop services</li> <li>• Collaborate with OTN Regional staff to develop services</li> <li>• Develop protocols for telemedicine consultations in collaboration with Consultants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate professional education opportunities</li> <li>• Plan educational sessions/series/programs in conjunction with educational organizers within the organization</li> <li>• Work with OTN's technical team to pilot new educational technologies as appropriate</li> <li>• Encourage the use of best practices as they apply to technology-enabled education</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and facilitate administrative opportunities</li> </ul>

	Clinical	Educational	Administrative
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act as a resource for the organization when undertaking the Accreditation Canada Telehealth Services program</li> </ul>		
<b>Additional Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<p><b>Operational Functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand internal policies and processes with respect to organizational support systems for clinical events, i.e., medical records, admitting/registration, privacy, patient consent, etc.</li> <li>Work with support organizational support systems to develop or revise processes for the integration of telemedicine into clinical service delivery</li> <li>Engage organizational clinicians for participation in telemedicine services</li> <li>Coordinate organizational scheduling requirements for participation in teleconsultations (space, equipment, clinicians, etc.)</li> <li>Ensure information, materials and equipment required for telemedicine consultations are available</li> <li>Prepare the patient and/or the Consultant for the clinical event</li> <li>Assist with client presentation and examination (as required)</li> <li>Facilitate use of equipment during</li> </ul>	<p><b>Operational Functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate access to educational resources, as made available by presenters, to participants; this may involve downloading and printing resources or directing participants to a web-based document repository, etc.</li> <li>Book studios for individuals interested in participating in educational events</li> <li>Outline processes/provide supports for members wanting to participate in educational events</li> <li>Provide guidance on the preparation of videoconferencing and webcasting</li> <li>Ensure presenter's technical and presentation requirements are met (laptop, document camera, camera work, etc.)</li> <li>Register studio/site for events</li> <li>Co-ordinate planning, registration, scheduling, and other related tasks for larger/more complex sessions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Operational Functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize additional audiovisual equipment requirements for Chairperson (if required)</li> <li>Reserve internal space and technology required for the event</li> <li>Explain the videoconference system/process to the Chairperson and participants (including etiquette/moderation skills)</li> <li>Ensure presentation materials are suitable for use over videoconferencing</li> <li>Distribute agendas and handouts</li> <li>Moderate events</li> </ul>

	Clinical	Educational	Administrative
	clinical event available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare space to facilitate clinical event</li> </ul>		
<b>Additional Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>OTN Membership obligations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in OTN program evaluation activities (as required)</li> <li>Participate in Ministry of Health and Long Term Care reporting requirements</li> <li>Handle referrals for consultations from OTN</li> </ul>	<b>OTN Membership obligations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handle, as based on internal organizational practices, invoicing for events that incur costs as per OTN policies; such costs could include long distance and gateway fees</li> </ul>	<b>OTN Membership obligations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handle invoicing for events that incur costs as per OTN policies</li> </ul>

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**REFERENCES**

OTN Membership Agreement  
[NIFTE Guidelines \(National Initiative for Telehealth- NIFTE Framework of Guidelines, 2003\)](#)

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**END OF GUIDELINE**

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