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ADDING TELEHEALTH TO YOUR DRUG TESTING PROGRAM



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ADDING TELEHEALTH TO YOUR DRUG TESTING PROGRAM

BY BILL CURRENT

Working remotely is, at many companies, the new normal. And it looks like it may be the permanent normal.

Flexjobs cites several surveys and studies that indicate working remotely appears to be here to stay. For example:

- 80% of company leaders plan to allow employees to “work remotely at least part of the time after the pandemic, and 47% will allow employees to work from home full-time.”
- 78% in a survey of 669 CEOs agree that “remote collaboration is here to stay for the long-term.”
- 65% of respondents in another survey report wanting to be “full-time remote employees post-pandemic, and 31% want a hybrid remote work environment.”
- 27% of workers say they are willing to take a 10% to 20% pay cut if allowed to work from home.¹

Why Telehealth Collection?

With remote working comes remote hiring. A quick search of the internet yields hundreds of websites that offer advice on how to find and land a remote job. Following the trend of remote interviews is remote drug testing, also known as telehealth collections.

A telehealth collection is typically performed in an offsite location with the donor also acting as the collector by utilizing a video app to guide them through the collection process. This makes it possible to perform a collection where it is most convenient, safe, and secure for the donor.

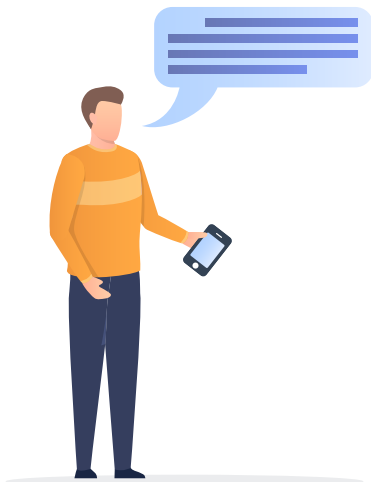
Telehealth collections typically involve a donor providing an oral fluid sample either from the workplace, a traditional collection facility or, as is most often the case, from the donor’s home.

There are several reasons why an employer would consider using telehealth collections. First and foremost, it fits well with the new-normal remote working environment brought about by the COVID-related lockdowns of 2020, that prevented many workers from returning to traditional worksites. Many employers conduct job interviews remotely and telehealth collections make it possible for them to still require job applicants to submit to a pre-employment drug test without needing an in-person observer

Telehealth collections performed at an employee’s or applicant’s home may also relieve the anxiety some people feel when required to personally go to an occupational health care facility where sick people often gather for COVID testing and treatment.

Additionally, telehealth collections are quick and cost effective. Without leaving home, a job applicant or employee can follow simple step-by-step directions provided with the telehealth collection kit to provide an oral fluid sample in minutes. The sample is sealed in a vial and, along with the appropriate paperwork, is sealed in a shipping envelope and sent to a specified laboratory. Results are available within 24-48 hours.

Of course, lab-based oral fluid testing, which was endorsed by the federal government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in October of 2019, is the key to a successful telehealth collection program. Oral fluid and telehealth collections go hand-in-hand because of the ease of performing an oral fluid collection and the fact that each collection can be 100% observed – whether in person or remotely. There is no need to secure a private restroom, turn off hot water, put blue dye in the toilet, or any of the other precautions needed with urine testing.



Oral fluid and telehealth collections go hand-in-hand

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How to make it work

Thanks in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth collections appear to be catching on. In a survey conducted by the Current Consulting Group toward the end of 2020, 13.9% of drug testing providers indicated that clients were showing interest in telehealth collections. If that question had been asked at the beginning of 2020, prior to the pandemic, most people would not have even been familiar with the term telehealth.

As mentioned, telehealth collections are ideal with pre-employment drug testing, but they also match up well with certain types of employee testing. For example, telehealth collections can also work well with random testing.

As with all aspects of a drug testing program, implementing a telehealth collection program must be done correctly to realize optimum success. Below are six key steps to follow when adding telehealth collections to a workplace drug testing program:

1. Decide how to perform the telehealth collection, which can be done via video platform or a dedicated app. A video platform allows a live observed collection while a dedicated collection app will walk the donor through the collection. Keep in mind that a standard video platform will not include several critical features typically only found with a dedicated collection app such as documentation of a valid or invalid collection (a feature that even brick-and-mortar collection facilities do not provide). Other features to look for include: the app's ability to capture the donor's photo ID as well as the specimen ID, customized chain-of-custody forms, audio and video evidence of the collection, and a connection with laboratories that specialize in analyzing oral fluid samples.
2. Check all applicable state and local drug testing laws, especially if you have business operations in states with a mandatory drug testing law. Because telehealth collections are relatively new to workplace drug testing, it will be virtually impossible to find a state law that specifically mentions telehealth collections. However, that does not mean

this collection method is not permitted. Collection guidelines provided by the telehealth collection app typically mirror key elements of specimen collection. If followed, these guidelines provide a certain level of legal defensibility to a drug testing program that includes telehealth collections.

3. Add a section to your drug testing policy that states the company's position on telehealth collections, including when it may be used, who it can apply to (applicants only or applicants and employees), and detailed instructions on how to participate in a telehealth collection.
4. Order a sufficient inventory of oral fluid/telehealth collection kits or ensure that your provider has a sufficient inventory available to meet your company's needs.
5. Inform employees of the company's telehealth collection policy and provide an explanation of when and how these collections will work.
6. Train supervisors and other management personnel.

Conclusion

We have all had to adapt over the last year, as has drug testing. Telehealth collections give employers a viable option for getting drug test samples collected in today's remote working world.

As with any other aspect of drug testing, implementing your telehealth collection programs correctly is critical. As you follow the steps outlined in this article, you will increase your opportunity for a successful program.

1. "Remote Work Statistics: Navigating the New Normal." December 21, 2020. <https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/remote-work-statistics/>



Telehealth collections typically involve a donor providing an oral fluid sample either from the workplace, a traditional collection facility or, as is most often the case, from the donor's home.





CHANGING TIMES CHANGING WORKPLACES

BY YVETTE FARNSWORTH BAKER, ESQ.

89% of business executives believe that most or many employees will work from home at least one day per week on a permanent basis.

One of the biggest disruptions to the workplace in 2020 was the seismic and almost instantaneous shift to working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By June 2020, less than 30 percent of U.S. employees were working on their business premises.¹ While at the time most people anticipated that changes would be temporary, after a year of uncertainty one thing is clear: remote working will be a significant part of the future.

The future of the workplace

The past year has alleviated some major concerns about working from home. For one, the vast majority of employers and employees have reported that productivity has not suffered. In a 2020 survey by Global Workplace Analytics, 86 percent of respondents reported that they were fully productive while working from home.² Additionally, 78 percent of office workers reported in the same survey that they had the resources they needed to work successfully from home, despite the fact that remote work sprang on most industries rather abruptly.

It is also clear that employees want to continue to work remotely into the future. Seventy-six percent of respondents in the above-cited survey want to work from home permanently at least a few days per week once restrictions are lifted. Similarly, 89 percent of business executives believe that most or many employees will work from home at least one day per week on a permanent basis, according to a December 2020 survey by PwC.³

Companies are taking notice of the shift and its long-term ramifications. PwC reported that at the end of 2020, 87 percent of business executives planned to make changes to their company's real estate portfolio in 2021.⁴ In one example, retailer REI announced that it would sell its brand new, unused 8-acre corporate campus in Washington, so that the company could "lean into remote working as an engrained, supported, and normalized model."⁵ In the survey by PwC, 72 percent of executives reported that they would be investing in tools for virtual collaboration, and 64 percent said they planned to train managers to supervise a more virtual workforce.

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How employees will connect

As working from home is here to stay, employers are looking for new ways to incorporate collaboration and teamwork into the new normal. Around half of U.S. business executives are looking to invest in: conference rooms with enhanced virtual connectivity (57 percent), communal space in the office (48 percent), and unassigned seating (45 percent).⁶ Workplaces look to transform to a space for employees to come together to collaborate, with employers then permitting individual work to be done remotely. The number one purpose of the workplace now, according to employees, is collaboration.⁷

Businesses are relying on technology to help connect workplace teams in the meantime. In 2020, Zoom had over 300 million meeting participants per day, Google Meets had over 100 million per day, and Microsoft Teams reported 75 million per day.⁸ Microsoft reported that its Microsoft 365 apps enabled 30 billion collaboration minutes in a single day in October 2020.⁹ And despite preferences for collaborating in-person, 87 percent of remote employees report they do feel more connected to their co-workers by using videoconferencing.¹⁰

The future of drug testing with remote employees

Employers can and should continue to implement drug testing policies even when employees work remotely. Beyond safety risks, substance-abusing employees cost employers in healthcare costs and higher insurance premiums, loss of productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. Across all industries, the average cost per year of a substance-abusing employee is \$7,000 in costs outside of workplace accidents.¹¹ Substance abusers perform at only 67% of their potential—making them 1/3 less productive than their non-substance abusing co-workers.¹² Employers should also be concerned about data security and company information privacy when considering the risks posed by substance-abusing employees working from home, as lapses in judgment is often a major factor in data breach.¹³

Additionally, we know that substance abuse has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirteen percent of Americans reported starting or increasing substance abuse due to the pandemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.¹⁴ Overdoses have spiked since the onset of the pandemic. Activities that relieve stress such as social interaction and exercise have been more difficult to access due to safety concerns and restrictions.¹⁵ And it is reasonable to believe that working from home would facilitate a sharp rise in substance abuse among susceptible employees, as the temptation to use during the workday is much higher at home than in the office. Now more than ever employers need to be vigilant in monitoring substance abuse among employees.

Employers have many options available to them in implementing workplace drug testing with remote employees. Employees working from home can still be required to report to a collection site for sample collection. Employers might even consider looking into mobile collection services. Employees can also be required to report to work on-site for the purpose of oral fluid collection for drug testing.

Continues on page 6...



Need space?

FDA cleared oral fluid drug and alcohol testing

- Collect anytime, anywhere
- Allows for 6 feet of separation



OraSure Technologies, Inc.



Additionally, telehealth is available now for sample collection. Oral fluid testing kits can be sent to an employee. The employee can then log on to a videoconference platform for observed collection of their oral fluid sample. A trained observer monitors the sample collection, and the sample is then sent in for testing. Alternatively, a video recording of the collection can be reviewed at a later time to ensure collection accuracy. This is common with telehealth apps designed specifically for drug and alcohol testing purposes. While this method is relatively new, it has the potential to quickly rise in popularity with the increase in working from home and with the rise in oral fluid testing.

Employers will need to review and likely revamp their workplace drug testing policies to specifically address remote employees. Firstly, employees working from home should be directly informed that they are subject to drug testing. An ounce of deterrence is worth a pound of penalty, and employees will likely be unaware that they are subject to testing even when working remotely. Policies with reasonable suspicion testing should define ways that suspicion is to be determined in a remote work situation. Factors such as decreased productivity, absenteeism, erratic work times, and/or signs of impairment observed on conference calls or video conferencing are some ways to include signs of impairment for off-site employees. Policies may also address timelines that remote workers are required to adhere to for drug testing, whether for random tests, reasonable suspicion tests, or scheduled periodic tests.

Employers should always be sure to consult knowledgeable professionals in order to verify that any changes to their policies comply with state and federal law requirements. There may be limitations on testing methodologies, collections, and sample types (among others) that an employer will need to consider.

Conclusion

Working from home will be a significant part of the future of the workplace. Remote work will not eliminate the risks and costs of substance abuse, and employers will be well-served to take the time now to consider how to implement workplace drug testing most effectively with remote employees.

Substance
abusers perform
at only 67% of
their potential.



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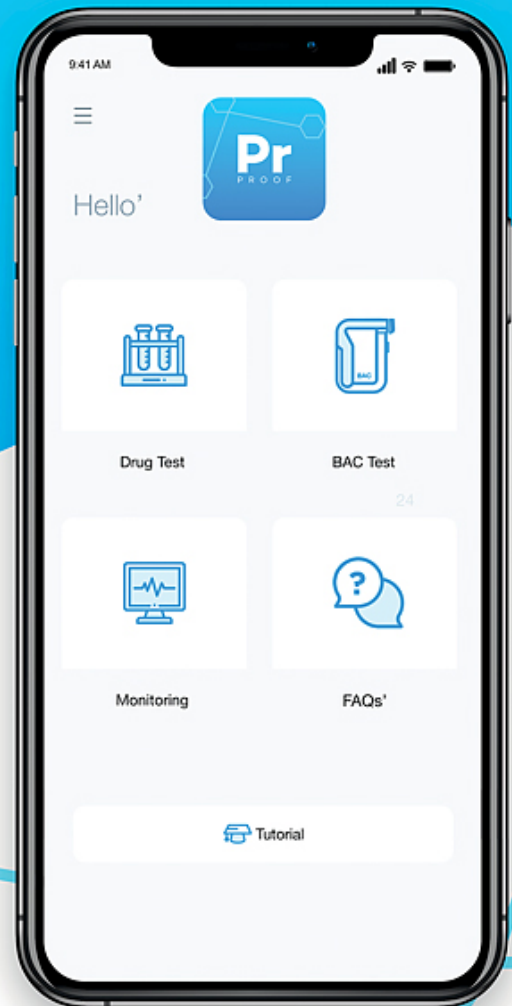
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PROOF™ is the world's first mobile app technology solution for observed drug and alcohol testing.

Anytime. Anywhere. Anyone.

Patent No. [US 10,244,198 B2](#)

For more information, contact us at proof@recoverytek.com



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Tutorial

- Tamper resistant Proof Pack shipped direct to donor
- Tutorial is required before testing
- Multiple kit options



Observed Collection

- Fully guided and app observed collection
- Photo ID and Specimen ID captured
- Tamper seals protect collection



Supporting Documentation

- Customized Chain Of Custody (COC)
- Audio/Video evidence of collection
- Certified Lab Results

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DRUG TESTING AND TELEHEALTH COLLECTIONS

AN
INTERVIEW
WITH

**KIRK CIZERLE
OF RECOVERYTREK**



Telehealth collections were already on the rise, but the COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted telehealth to new heights. What's the Buzz recently met with Kirk Cizerle, CEO of RecoveryTrek, a national company that helps track treatment programs and administer drug and alcohol testing programs. Additionally, RecoveryTrek recently launched PROOF®, a telehealth drug test collection app.

WTB: What is a telehealth collection?

KC: A telehealth collection is typically performed in a remote location and the donor is also the collector. Using a video app like PROOF, the donor is guided through the collection process by the technology or application. It takes the person through all the required steps in a specific order. If any step requires a timer, for instance, the app provides that functionality and when complete the donor is prompted to move to the next step.

Telehealth collections make it possible to perform a collection at the location where it is most convenient, safe, and secure for the donor. Those words—convenient, safe, and secure—can mean different things depending on the circumstance, but in a pandemic, telehealth collections keep the donor out of harm's way because the collection is performed in a secure place where the donor feels safe and is able to practice social distancing. Also, depending on the circumstances, a telehealth collection allows anonymity for the donor by not having to visit a collection facility, which can be important depending on the testing purpose.

With telehealth collections it doesn't matter when or where the collection takes place. It doesn't matter where the donor lives or when the donor is available. Telehealth collections eliminate scheduling concerns because not all facilities are open and available to collect 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Telehealth collections are truly 24/7, 365 days a year. Workday, weekend, holiday, or middle of the night, there are no restrictions.

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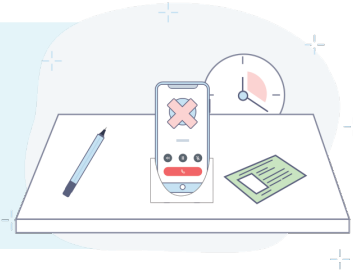
Telehealth collections make it possible to perform a collection at the location where it is most convenient, safe, and secure for the donor.

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THE TELEHEALTH COLLECTION WORKFLOW

1

After you have received the collection kit and instructions from the drug test provider, you can begin your collection. Be sure to have a flat surface accessible and a photo ID on hand.



2

Prepare to start your collection. Open the app or start the videoconference to begin.



3

Access test instructions. Start the test by clicking "begin" in the app or turn on your videoconference to begin the collection.

4

Provide a photo of your valid ID or show your valid ID to the collector via videoconference.

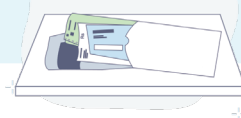


5

Ensure that your collection device matches up with the device in the instructions.

6

Once prompted, open your device package and begin your collection.



7

Follow the instructions to ensure the collection is completed properly.



8

Swab, snap, and seal.



9

Place your device in the provided package and seal it. Follow the instructions to mail your sample to your testing facility.



WTB: How does a typical telehealth collection work with PROOF?

KC: Initially, an employer or organization orders collection supplies to be shipped to the donor's preferred location, donors are notified electronically that an order has been placed on their behalf and that the supplies are en route and provided with instructions for what to do when the supplies arrive.

Once the supplies have arrived, the donor will be guided through each step of the collection process, including their login credentials, the basics on how the collection is going to work so they know what to expect, and how to perform the collection as quickly as possible and in a way that is convenient to them.

The donor will typically start with our two-minute tutorial. When they complete the tutorial, the donor can either start the collection immediately or when it's more convenient. When they click go, the platform will begin the process of walking them through each step of the collection process. For an oral fluid collection, the donor will be instructed to open the package containing all the supplies that they will need. PROOF even instructs them when to remove the collection device from its separately sealed package, how to remove it properly, how to insert it in their mouth, and for how long to leave it there. The built-in timer will notify them when it is done and ready to package in a sealed vial, how to put it in a lab specimen bag, and how to complete and attach chain of custody paperwork.

PROOF then walks the donor through the process of packaging everything in a shipping package, which is provided. Finally, a summary is shown confirming that all of these steps have been completed properly. Of course, the very last step is the lab analysis and the reporting of an accurate result.

WTB: Can Chain of Custody (COC) forms still be used?

KC: Yes, COC forms can be used with a telehealth collection and with PROOF specifically. In most drug testing instances, proper chain of custody is still required, including that the specimen vial was properly sealed. The collection vial that contains the donor's saliva must be sealed, the seal must include the date and donor's initials, and the seal must be placed over top of the vial cap to validate that the vial was not opened or manipulated in any way.

WTB: Can you use oral fluid testing with telehealth collections?

KC: Absolutely. In fact, oral fluid is probably the best testing method to use with telehealth collections. There may be other options, but oral fluid is absolutely at the top of the list due to the collection process. An oral fluid collection is easily witnessed, can be appropriately witnessed remotely via audio / video recording, and is easily performed with minimal guidance and oversight. Most people are very successful doing an oral fluid collection through a telehealth platform even if it's their first time due to their innate simplicity.

Additionally, the necessary oral fluid collection devices have been in existence for years, are time-tested to be accurate, and the overall quality assurance is there. It is also affordable, especially compared to collections at a brick-and-mortar facility.

WTB: Are telehealth collections for workplace drug testing legal in every state?

KC: We encourage all of our clients to comply with all applicable state laws and we can help them find that type of information. So far, we have not run into conflicts with any state laws. We do not anticipate issues in the future. It is important to know that telehealth medical services have been in use for many years, but unlike those services, telehealth sample collections are not delivering any type of care or medical diagnoses. What we are confirming is that each step in the collection process was followed, that the collection was completed properly, and therefore quality drug test results can be expected.

WTB: What is the difference between PROOF and other video platforms like Zoom?

KC: For one thing, PROOF was specifically designed for sample collections whereas other video app platforms were designed for meetings. PROOF, for example, does not require any scheduling by the donor, it can take place at any time that is convenient for the donor. With other video platforms you're back to arranging everyone's schedules (collector and donor), which means you lose the convenience factor that PROOF offers. The only schedule we worry about with PROOF is that of the donor who going to do his or her own collection.

Another huge difference is scalability. What I mean by that is the number of collections that can be performed simultaneously. With PROOF there is zero limit to the number of collections that take place at the same time. With other video platforms, you have to schedule two people's time and that means you need to staff your 'collector team' with as many people as you need to have performing collections. Also, there is no built-in guidance system to walk the donor through the process step by step, which means there could be a lot of stopping and starting over as the collector takes time to explain things, which wastes time. From our research, Zoom-based telehealth collections are usually about two per hour because it is limited by the number of collectors who are available. A PROOF collection takes 15 minutes or less (with many as fast as 10 minutes), but we can run unlimited number of collections at the same time.

WTB: How do telehealth collections affect drug test cheating efforts?

KC: I always say, "where there's a will, there's a way," so you can never say any collection method is 100% fool proof, but telehealth collections combined with oral fluid are very difficult to successfully cheat. There are just more checks and balances in place compared to any other collection methods. With oral fluid and telehealth collection the donor really does not have much opportunity to cheat because they are prompted at every step in the process while being recorded (audio and video). With limited time to complete the collection, it becomes almost impossible to manipulate the collection process without it being detected.

I would be silly to say the combination of oral fluid and telehealth collections are 100% safe from cheating, but the likelihood is much less. However, without a professional collector involved there are no collusion opportunities between collectors and donors to implement some type of financial incentives to perform a collection in a way that falsely benefits the donor.

WTB: What are the advantages of a telehealth collection?

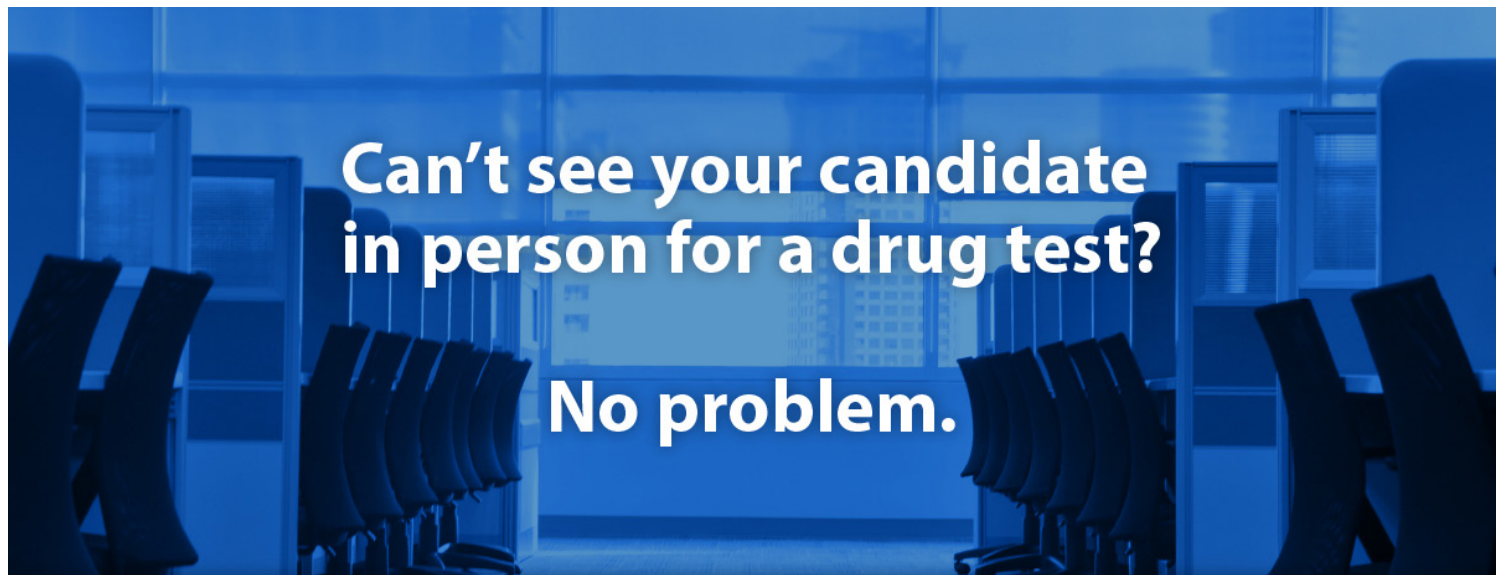
KC: The primary advantages are convenience, safety, and security. During the pandemic, the priority has been to be safe and secure and social distance from others to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19. If you're at home and you have been quarantined, you are as safe and secure as possible when performing a telehealth collection.

Also, telehealth collections are on a level of convenience second to none because they make it possible for donors to perform a collection on their schedule.

On the employer or organization side, the biggest advantage is a collection can be done more easily and quickly, with more information more readily available. Employers can track the process more accurately compared to traditional methods of collections. They can easily confirm the donor has received all necessary supplies and has completed the actual collection correctly. PROOF walks the donor through the process step-by-step, requires the donor to confirm their identification, and records every step of the process. If you do not know that a collection was done properly and the donor's identification was confirmed, the test result is meaningless. With traditional "brick-and-mortar" facilities you're trusting that all was done properly, but with a telehealth collection app like PROOF, you are witnessing and recording the entire process.



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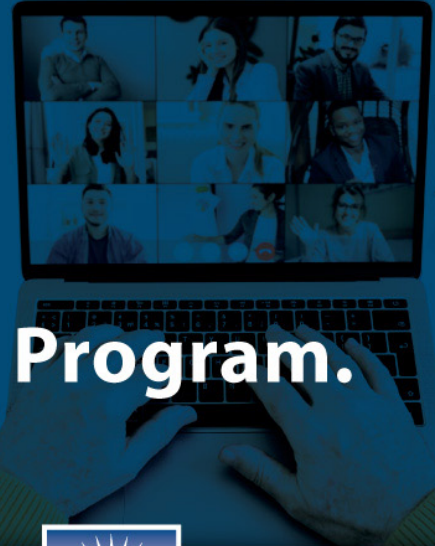
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