

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION  
Medical leadership for mind, brain and body.

# APA DIGITAL HEALTH: APP ADVISOR

Presented to the Minnesota Psychiatric Society: Digital Apps for Clinical Practice: What You Need to Know | Nathan A. Tatro, MA, Deputy Director of Digital Health, American Psychiatric Association | October 16, 2021

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## APA & DIGITAL HEALTH



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- Digital Health @ APA
  - Member-driven initiatives
- App Advisor – Quick Overview ([www.psychiatry.org/appadvisor](http://www.psychiatry.org/appadvisor))
  - History and composition
  - Current and future work

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## WHY APP ADVISOR & APA MODEL?



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1. Apps change often
2. Apps need to be matched with a specific patient
3. Apps need to be used in the right way
4. Apps need to be evaluated for risks and benefits
5. Evidence is rapidly changing and this cannot be captured by a static score
6. “Top ten” and other hierarchical lists don’t make sense

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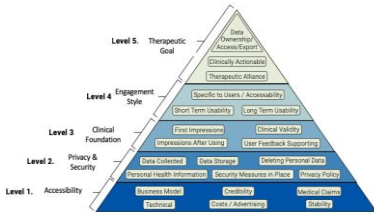
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### THE APA APP EVALUATION MODEL



Adapted from Torous, JB, Chan, DR, Gipson, SY-MT, et al. "A hierarchical framework for evaluation and informed decision-making regarding smartphone apps for clinical care. Psychiatr Serv. 2018; 69: 498-500

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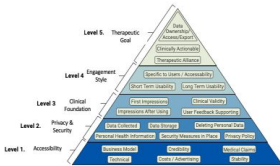
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### LEVEL 1 - ACCESSIBILITY



- Accessibility
  - This provides a framework for completing the evaluation
  - Helps you to decide whether to complete a full evaluation—is there enough information to merit a review?
  - Not every question needs to be answered in order to proceed with an evaluation



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### LEVEL 2 – PRIVACY AND SECURITY



- Privacy and Security help you to measure the risk of using an app
- Like any other psychiatric measure or intervention, using apps with patients carries a risk
  - Is there a privacy policy?
  - What data are collected?
  - Are personal data de-identified?
  - Can you delete data?
  - Does the app use cookies?
  - Do data stay on the device or are they sent to developer?



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### LEVEL 3 – CLINICAL FOUNDATION



- Many mental health apps may claim to be beneficial, though clinical evidence tends to be sparse
- What types of evidence are there?
  - Anecdotal; customer reviews
  - Concept validity
  - Face validity
  - Clinical evidence (including RCTs)



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### LEVEL 4 – ENGAGEMENT STYLE (USABILITY)



- What are the app's overall functionality
  - Highlight subjective. Different people will have different impressions.
  - How user-friendly is the interface?
  - Easy to use on a long-term basis?
  - Are features customizable?
  - Accessible for those with impaired vision/other disabilities?



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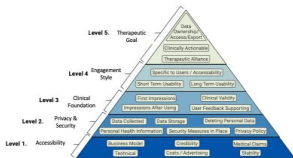
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### THERAPEUTIC GOAL/DATA INTEGRATION



- How the app handles data affects whether the app is clinically useful.
- Are the data accessible to the user?
- Can data be exported to an electronic health record (EHR) (i.e., "interoperable")
- Can data be printed or shared via other tools?



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POLICY AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS



- Regulatory landscape
  - FDA, CMS
- The Interoperability and Information Blocking Rule: Future of Apps in Care
  - What are “APIs”?
- Apps, privacy and HIPAA
  - What does the Office of Civil Rights say?
- Change management and app integration into clinical practice

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