Telehealth Tips: How to Get the Most Out of Telehealth Services

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Why Design a Telehealth Tip Sheet?

- Why did I select this project?
  - Specific family I met in the autism clinic.
  - Telehealth was only option for Early Intervention (EI). Discontinued after negative experience.
  - 6-year-old child, non-speaking, no services outside of school, multiple suspensions in kindergarten
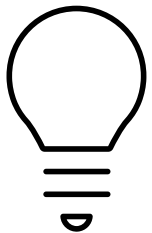
What if this family and the EI provider working with them had been better equipped for telehealth services?

Why Design a Telehealth Tip Sheet? (cont)

- Children, youth, and young adults (YYA) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in rural areas may only have access to telehealth services.
- Other individuals and families with children who have IDD do not want to go into an office/clinic setting.
- Some providers only offer telehealth services.
- Some families may think telehealth services are less effective than in-person services for their children with IDD.

Goal: Empower Families and Providers and Improve Access

Project Goal
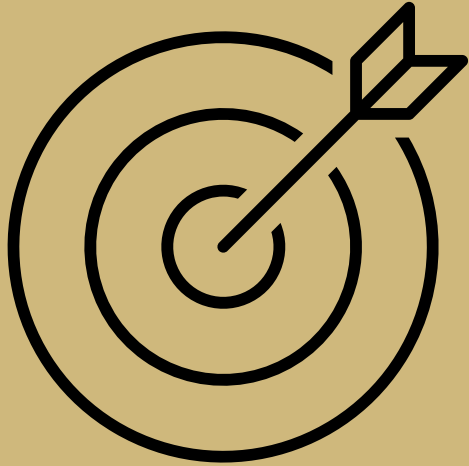
- Provide information on telehealth best practices so families are empowered and satisfied with this modality of services.

- Improve the quality of care through telehealth and provide necessary information to expand access to services.

Methods

Discussions with families who have received telehealth

Research: telehealth efficacy and strategies in IDD populations

Drafting and feedback – supervisor, family trainees, and providers

Biggest Takeaways

- Flexibility is essential
- Telehealth services do not need to mirror in-person services
- Preparation and communication are essential (both for providers and individuals with IDD and families)

Product – Tip Sheets

- Designed for…

  - Children, YYA, and their families - receiving telehealth services

  - Providers – offering telehealth services to children with IDD and their families

Tips for Providing Telehealth Services to Children, Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Their Families

Before Your Session

- Conduct a pre-session consultation to understand the child's modes of communication and supports needed, sensory preferences, and engagement strategies.
- Ensure the telehealth platform is user-friendly and has accessibility features like captions or alternative communication methods.
- Provide clear instructions to families about preparing the environment, minimizing distractions, and gathering necessary materials.
- Create a visual schedule or social story to explain the telehealth process.
- Set up a backup communication method in case of technical difficulties.

During Your Session
- Be flexible and patient—telehealth sessions may require different pacing than in-person visits.
- Use clear, simple language and allow extra processing time for responses.
- Incorporate visual supports, gestures, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, such as AAC apps and text-to-speech software as needed.
- Guide caregivers on implementing strategies and allow time for them to practice with real-time feedback.
- Encourage families to use familiar objects, toys, or routines to keep their child engaged.

After Your Session
- Send families a summary of the session, including strategies discussed.
- Encourage families to follow up with questions or share videos of their child practicing target skills (if comfortable).
- Maintain open communication and provide alternative ways for families to reach out for support.
- Schedule regular check-ins to assess progress and adjust interventions as needed.

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Tips for Children, Youth, Young Adults (YYA), and Their Families Receiving Telehealth Services

Before Your Session

- Ensure you have a private, quiet space with a stable internet connection.
- Familiarize your child with telehealth technology by practicing video calls with a familiar person.
- Create or ask your provider for a visual schedule or social story to explain the telehealth process.
- Communicate with your provider ahead of time to discuss expectations and materials needed.

During Your Session

- Take the pressure off—your child does not need to sit in front of a screen for the entire session.
- Think of the session as "caregiver coaching" time—your provider is there to help you support your child's development.
- Assist with technology setup, provide prompts, and help keep your child engaged.
- Use individualized communication strategies such as visual aids, sign language/gestures, or alternative communication devices.
- Be flexible with session structure, allowing breaks and reinforcers if needed to maintain your child's engagement.

After Your Session

- Follow up with your provider to ask questions or share ideas.
- Implement the suggested strategies between sessions to reinforce learning.
- If comfortable, provide videos or pictures of your child engaging in therapy session activities for provider feedback.
- Maintain regular appointments for consistency and communicate what strategies work best for your child.
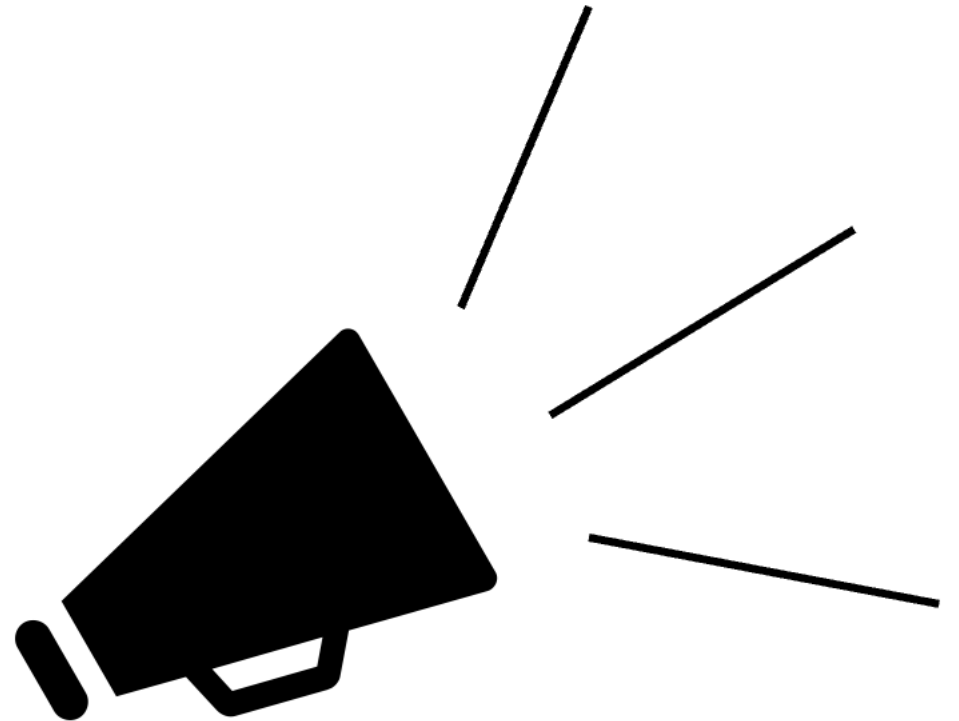
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Dissemination

- EPIC Dot Phrases
  - TELEHEALTHTIPSFAMILY
  - TELEHEALTHTIPSPROVIDERS
- Phrase added to reports of children and YYA who may use telehealth services

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