Disclosures

Financial
- Tami Radzai, M.A., CCC-SLP, is employed as a Clinical Quality Manager with PresenceLearning, a company that provides teletherapy to children nationwide.

Non-Financial
- Tami Radzai is a member of ASHA SIG 18: Telepractice

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the necessary components of a high quality telepractice service delivery model.
- List four areas a clinician should assess when considering a client’s appropriateness for telepractice.
- Name at least one accommodation for each of the four areas that could be used to increase the quality of the telehealth services.

What is Telepractice/Telehealth?

Telepractice/Telehealth:
The delivery of therapy services at a distance through the use of technology.

What is Telepractice?

- Telepractice is a service delivery model recognized by leading professional and medical organizations including the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), the Mayo Clinic, and the American Telemedicine Association.
- ASHA defines telepractice as “the application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology and professional services at a distance by linking clinician/client or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.” (www.asha.org).

Research:

- Telepractice has been endorsed by ASHA as a viable service delivery method since 2005. ASHA has worked in partnership with both national and state speech-language-hearing associations to ease current restrictions surrounding telepractice, and has supported efforts to move toward Medicaid reimbursement for online-based speech-language pathology services in all states.
Research:

- Barriers include technology failure, inadequate training, lack of specified procedures, etc.
- Benefits include access to services, individualized programming, access to specialists, ease the SLP shortage, easily accepted by students, etc.
- Reasons for acceptance and use of telepractice.
- Suggestions to resolve issues included improving technology, training the PSP, developing a list of procedures, scheduling, etc.

Why Use Telepractice

- Throughout the US, programs are struggling to meet the growing related service needs of the children they serve.
- Increased identification of need has made waitlists a reality for many programs.
- Factoring in travel time, there are not enough hours in the day for onsite providers to serve all the families in need.
- The SLP tree is not growing as hoped.
- Technology is an integrated part of today’s families.

Research:

- Interviews were conducted with five SLPs experienced in the delivery of telepractice.
- Barriers include technology failure, inadequate training, lack of specified procedures, etc.
- Benefits include access to services, individualized programming, access to specialists, ease the SLP shortage, easily accepted by students, etc.
- Reasons for acceptance and use of telepractice.
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Keys to a Successful Telepractice Program

- Technology
- Primary Support Person
- Privacy & Security
- Client Selection

Technology

- Telepractice uses parents or other professionals to help log in to a therapy platform using a computer equipped with a standard webcam and speakers.
- Audio and video are integrated, connecting the child with his or her assigned clinician in a live, online session.
- Sessions can take place in the home or school setting.

Essential Components
Primary Support Person

- True key to success!
- Partners with telepractitioner to ensure a successful therapy session for the child.
- Scope of responsibilities depends on child’s abilities and program model.
- Can be aide, teacher, parent, or primary provider.
- Should be comfortable with technology, but doesn’t need to be expert.

Client Selection

ASHA identifies four main areas for consideration:

- Physical/Sensory (visual/hearing impaired, needs physical prompts, necessary needs)
- Cognitive/Behavioral (attention, behavior, cognitive deficit)
- Communication (auditory comprehension, speech intelligibility, cultural variables)
- Support Resources (availability of technology, environment, adult ability to operate and troubleshoot technology and transmission)

Most children & families would be appropriately served through telepractice!

Privacy & Security

When providing telepractice services, a provider must ensure video-conferencing and data collection meet privacy and security federal laws:

- Health Information: Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009 (HITECH; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.-a)

Video-conferencing options:

- Business class - purchasing of hardware; typically used at large facilities such as universities or medical centers
- Software-based - provider information on the level of encryption and includes an agreement with the practitioner on how the client’s information is protected (Zoom, Vsee, proprietary platform of company)
- Public domain - is not validated as secure and often does not indicate how information is encrypted (e.g., Facetime, Skype, and Google Hangouts)

Physical/Sensory

| What if the client requires hands-on-hand assistance to utilize tools? | Consider the role of the Primary Support Person |
| What if the client has a visual impairment that prevents the ability to see computer graphics and text? | Similar to barriers with face-to-face therapy May require on-site manipulations, similar to online OT sessions |
| What if the client has a hearing impairment (hi) and either has a limited ability to hear the clinician or uses sign to communicate? | Audible beep can be fitted to a hearing aid if headset is not appropriate Consider on-site supports already in place for client |
| What if the client has sensory issues that don’t allow use of materials, or that are aggravated by the light/background of the computer? | Work to modify computer-related stimuli as well as general room environment |

Cognitive/Behavioral

| What if client has difficulty maintaining sustained attention? | Student should be referred as an appropriate candidate |
| What if client exhibits frequent and/or disruptive behavior issues? | Consider role of Primary Support Person May benefit from individual therapy sessions |
| What if client with a cognitive impairment is not able to follow basic and directions? | Consider role of on-site supports already in place |

Communication

| What if the client can’t read or recognize letters? | Consider activities available to you during sessions What would your requirement be for on-site sessions? |
| What if the client has a severe psychosocial disorder or apraxia? | Need not be a barrier Ensure superior audio/video |
| What if the client has a hard time following directions? | Consider the role of the Primary Support Person Provide visual supports on the platform |
| What if the client needs bilingual therapy? | Same as in-person Client should be referred as appropriate Can be a benefit to telepractice |
**Support Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What if the client doesn't have Internet access or the speeds are very slow?</th>
<th>Must have Internet access for synchronous therapy. Slow speeds can be an issue; need to consider audio/video quality. Consider access to tech support. What if there is a problem?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What if the client needs assistance due to physical or cognitive limitations?</td>
<td>Consider the role of the Primary Support Person. Student may already have access to a 1:1 aide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if the environment for therapy is not ideal for the client?</td>
<td>Our responsibility as clinicians is to support a therapeutic environment. Consider lighting, extraneous noise, seating, etc.</td>
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</table>

**Ethical Considerations**

- ASHA Code of Ethics still applies when providing services via telepractice.
- All telepractice sessions must be equal in quality to services provided in an in-person setting.

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**Case Study**

Jared is a 5th grader who is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He receives services in the areas of speech and language, social skills, occupational therapy and specialized academic instruction. When the primary support person escorts Jared to the speech session and places the headphones on his head, he immediately pulls them off and refuses to wear them. When he sees his image on the screen, he stands up and walks away.

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**Video Example**

Jasmine

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**Video Example**

Ben

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**Questions:**

Q & A