

TELEHEALTH LEARNING AND CONSULTATION (TLC) TUESDAYS

Telehealth Basics, March 31, 2020

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Participant Question & Presenter Response

Q1 *What are commonly used telehealth platforms? Which ones are HIPAA compliant?*

A1 The Zoom business platform is commonly used and is designed to be HIPAA compliant. Another common HIPAA compliant platform is Google Meets. Additional platforms that offer compliant plans include: VSee, Skype for Business, GoToMeeting, Vidyo, and Adobe Connect. To address needs related to physical distancing requirements for COVID-19, HIPAA compliance regulations have been suspended in most areas allowing for the use of almost any modality. It is still recommended to use a HIPAA compliant platform; however, there may be a need to utilize other platforms in some instances.

Resource regarding HIPAA compliance: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/03/17/ocr-announces-notification-of-enforcement-discretion-for-telehealth-remote-communications-during-the-covid-19.html>

Q2 *How do I obtain informed consent for telehealth? How do I ensure my appointments are secure and confidential?*

A2 Informed consent may be obtained verbally or via online signature, secure email, snail mail or fax. Although verbal consent is not preferred, it can be obtained and documented in treatment notes. Guidelines of confidentiality should be discussed upfront so that clients are well-informed to consent to the service. For example, it is important to let clients know that sessions are not recorded. If you decide to record, you can manually make this selection, but must make clients aware and of course provide a rationale for recording the session for your patient/client. Sending individual links for sessions and/or "locking" the room can also prevent others from joining. When conducting groups, using a "webinar" versus "meeting" can allow people to participate while also protecting identities, if needed.

Q3 *When is telehealth appropriate and when is it not?*

A3 Telehealth has scores of benefits, including increased access to quality health care, cost efficiencies and research-supported outcomes and satisfaction. The medium also has many

applications beyond the scope of helping patients, such as teaching/education, webinars, clinical supervision, consultation with professionals, fidelity monitoring and visitation. During a public health crisis, telehealth enables providers to connect with clients (or other professionals/colleagues) who are physical distancing, allows staff to work from home, and enables rapid access to behavioral health for those with significant life changes, such as the stress of unemployment. Additionally, homes where interpersonal violence is occurring add another layer of safety concern in conducting telehealth in homes. However, use of telehealth should be considered on a case-by-case basis. People experiencing homicidal/suicidal ideation, thought disorders, or internet addictions might not be appropriate for telehealth, but it may be a temporary solution when needed.

Q4 *Where can I look for funding to support the use of telehealth?*

A4 During this time, funding may be available to help support the use of telehealth in your clinics, schools, and communities. First, look to your philanthropic foundations for grant support. Another resource for information on funding may be state agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, as that agency regularly receive updates on federal funding opportunities.

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