

Preparing for Successful Teletherapy

Communication

- Communicate with your client in advance to ensure that he or she has the right equipment and set up for the session and feels comfortable using the computer.
 - Create an 'Email Template' that you can send to the family before the first session or before the evaluation. This email should include a welcome, hardware/software requirements, the date and time of the scheduled session/evaluation, a link to access the session, and a description of what the parent/caregiver can expect during your first visit.

Hardware/Software

- Use a device that is hard wired rather than connected wirelessly if possible.
 - Use the latest version of Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari
- Choose a platform that works well for you.
 - Best practice would be to use a HIPAA compliant platform
 - Perform a trial session with the platform to ensure that everything is running smoothly.
 - Practice with your friends, family or colleagues before you meet your clients online.
 - Consider the platform's capabilities
 - Screen sharing
 - Interactive
- Limit other video tools during teletherapy
 - Make sure that neither your computer nor your client's computer runs updates or installs software during your online session as it will slow your connection.
 - Make sure you and your client do not use any other video tools (such as Skype) during the session. All other video tools must be turned off, so the videoconferencing platform can work properly.
 - Make sure that neither you nor your client leaves too many browsers and websites open, especially the ones that have online games. It is better to have one browser with a website open at the time.
 - If you need to access to several websites during your session, keep a list of the links handy in a Word document and be ready to copy/paste one link at a time, as needed. If you have too many websites open, your connection can slow down.
 - Make sure that no one at your house or the client's house tries to stream videos (such as Netflix) or play online games during a session, because it can slow the connection.
 - If you decide to screen-share websites during your session, make sure you review the particular site ahead of time. Many online games and websites include ads that are distracting or inappropriate.
- Use a headset if possible
 - This minimizes background noise
 - Can also be used to "coach" a parent while the parent is coaching their own child

- This strategy will eliminate your voice to the child and can be useful for children that may be distracted with both the clinician and the caregiver
- Learn basic troubleshooting tips
 - How to mute/unmute microphone
 - How to enable/disable video
 - See “Hardware/software” tips
- Be sure that your webcam shows your whole face
- When typing your progress notes during the session, consider muting your audio, as keyboarding can be loud, especially if you both use headphones.

Environment

- Be sure to choose a location in your home or office that is well lit and free of distractions
 - Ensure no one else is within hearing range
 - Do not sit directly in front of a window as the viewer will likely only see your outline
- Dress appropriately
 - Consider wearing plain, solid-color shirts (pastel or jewel tones) and avoid bright colors or stripes. Very bright shirts and shirts with busy patterns (stripes) can create a distracting optical illusion.
 - Avoid wearing shiny jewelry, as it can be distracting.
 - Avoid wearing jingly jewelry, as the microphone will pick up the noise, making it difficult for the client to understand you.
- Have ALL the tools you need and think you MIGHT need available for easy retrieval!
 - Create a teletherapy “feeding kit”
 - For the clinician
 - Basic tools or props you commonly use in feeding therapy
 - Visual supports
 - For the family
 - Help the family develop a “teletherapy feeding kit” so that they have easy access to tools

Logistics

- Allow yourself some time before each session (at least 5–10 minutes) to stretch and prepare for the next client.

First session

- Use the first session to familiarize yourself and your family about teletherapy service delivery.
 - Educating, coaching and planning what sessions will look like
 - Discuss what the caregiver’s role will be during the session
 - Identify that there will be a learning curve
 - Expect that sessions will become smoother as both therapist and client/family use teletherapy
 - Review technical tips with family
 - Be sure you have your materials easily accessible
 - Are there any documents that parents need access as a hard copy?

- Have your list of links available
 - Have your screen share documents available
- If not already done previously
 - Determine what resources or tools the family has access to at home
 - Help develop the “teletherapy feeding kit” for home use
- Generalize your routine from clinic to home
 - Encourage/help family to develop a routine similar to pre-teletherapy
 - Use a visual schedule if needed
 - Can be screen shared
 - Build in sensory breaks as needed
- The coaching model may be particularly useful in teletherapy
 - Builds the capacity of the child and the family

Engagement

- Your best tool is YOU! Embrace therapeutic use of self
- Capitalize on child’s interests during feeding as you do at the clinic
 - Incorporate virtual high-fives to the child (they love this!)
- Remember, most of our clients love their screens. This is beneficial video chat usage!
- Teletherapy helps build a nice bridge between home and the clinic, especially with those children where inconsistencies are seen between the environments
- This is an organic opportunity to elevate home programming/follow-through of strategies