CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRANSITIONING TO TELETherAPy/Distance Learning SvEICES DUE TO COVID-19

Is teletherapy/distance learning services suitable for your students?  
Teletherapy should be suitable for most, if not all of your students. This is our time for related services/specialized instructional support personnel to show how teletherapy works, provide continuity of services during a crisis, and support for students and teams, including family and teachers.

Teletherapy/distance learning is a change in service delivery model, so therapy may not be able to be provided in the same manner:
- provide coaching vs direct therapy
- decrease session time due to attention
- LRE...has changed! Distance Learning & Home Everyday Activities
  - Can integrate the student’s goals into these as part of your direct and coaching sessions for parent support and strategies
  - Play with people, Meals and snacks, Play with toys, Books, letters and numbers, Play with props, Caregiving, Chores, Transitions

Teletherapy should be determined on a case-by-case basis to ensure:
- family has accessibility to the technology?
- family is willing to receive teletherapy services?
- a family member (e-helper/facilitator) is needed for the student and someone is available/willing?
- What limitations, if any, are there?

School-Based Therapy to Teletherapy Benefits
- Serve our communities
  - Current waivers to increase access
- Our professional organizations support teletherapy
  - Already in many settings
  - Ethical and regulatory guidelines
  - Evidence of effectiveness
- Still same, just change in service delivery model
  - Same foundational therapeutic knowledge and skills
- Unique opportunity and new possibilities
  - Showcase our professional skills

(www.speechtherapypd.com; Kristin Martinez, CSHA Teletherapy Bootcamp, Autism Navigator, The Florida State University; Adapted by EBS Healthcare, March 2020)
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Considerations of Your Caseload: How might each of these aspects influence your planning, session expectations, back-up plans?

- Age
- Cognition
- Attention span, behavioral and motivational characteristics
- Physical and sensory characteristics
- Communication ability
- Visual skills (can they see you on the screen?)
- Caregiver ability and relationship to student (parent, nurse, family member)

Age

- 3 years and up should be able to participate well with technology
- Consider online resources, age appropriate motor skill levels
- Use motivators: favorite shows, music
- Consider their skills
- Review progress notes and prior testing

Cognition

- Consider contacting teacher to double-check what student needs to work on
- Pre-plan games, videos, online resources to make sure student will understand and be able to follow
- Encourage more/less participation from caregiver depending on student's cognition and attention span
  - The caregiver knows their child, rely on their expertise

Attention Span, Behavioral and Motivational Characteristics

- Consider this on a case by case basis!
- Will your student benefit from a certain timed session despite their IEP minutes?
- Document time carefully- may need to consider doing makeup minutes once school resumes or during ESY. Bring these concerns to your admin...

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- Consider reinforcement schedule/behavior intervention plan already in place
- Motivational: Experienced tele-therapists are saying their students do well with this alternative therapy! This generation is growing up with technology and they might find this approach refreshing!

Physical and Sensory Characteristics
- How independently will the student access the computer? Using tools?
- How involved does the caregiver have to be?
- What does the student need in their environment to succeed in this session?
- Would they benefit from breaks in the session to re-focus?
- Does it help to have them in a separate contained area to help engagement in the session?
- Remember the caregiver is experienced in handling their child, so listen on their feedback, ask for their opinion

Similar Barriers to In-Person Therapy
- Visual impairment:
  - Can the student see the screen? Computer graphics? Text?
  - More clear auditory commands, more guidance of caregiver, use music as a motivator, in home manipulatives)
  - Look for resources that may appeal to the student
    - Example: perhaps you know that they see the color red best
- Hearing impairment (HI)
  - Audio boot may be fitted to a hearing aid if headset is not appropriate
- Sensory issues (i.e. aggravated by the light/color/sound of the computer?)
  - Work to modify computer-related stimuli as well as general room environment
- Use feedback from the caregiver

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Communication

- What is the student's receptive/expressive ability?
- Remind caregivers not to assist too much or too little based on the student's ability
- We don't want the caregiver to do the work for them if the student is capable...however we have to ask more of the caregiver if the student has challenges.
- Use of visual support in your therapy platform (i.e. visual instructions/schedule)

Caregiver ability: Caregivers know the most about their child

- What roles and responsibilities will they need to assume?
- How much independence do they typically allow the child?
- Are they in agreement with telehealth?
- What resources/materials do they have to help?

Considerations to Increase Student Engagement

- Use visuals to increase engagement with younger students or those with more needs (ADHD, Autism, etc.)
  - See the following slides for some examples
  - Look to the resources on the EBS Google Drive for more examples you can incorporate and adjust to fit your needs
- Find free PowerPoint templates to set themes to make your own
  - slidesgo.com/kids (use thank you video at end to credit the theme)
- Keep activities brief
- Add sounds or visuals to the presentation as a reward or transition

Distance Learning Options: Some caregivers may elect not to participate in teletherapy:

- this may be due to lack on internet connection, availability of a device or other reasons
- caregivers can elect to have materials/resources/activities sent to them in the mail
- follow-up via phone or text is an alternative way to confirm receipt of materials and ask caregivers if they have any questions regarding the materials sent.

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