Telepractice in Schools

Common Challenges and Solutions

Disclosures

Financial

Kristin Martinez is employed by PresenceLearning.

Non-Financial

Kristin Martinez is a member of ASHA SIG 18: Telepractice.

Objectives

1. Identify the necessary components of a high quality telepractice service delivery model.

2. List five challenge areas that are unique to providing services to a school via telepractice

3. Name potential solutions for each challenge area.

Research

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2005). *Teleprateice: Key Issues* [Client/Patient Selection]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.

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

Molini-Avejonas, et al, A Systematic Review of the Use of Telepractice in Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences *Journal of Telemed Telecare* (2015)

Literature review of 103 papers published between 2008 and 2014. Some findings:
- Telehealth considered by respondents to be "similar" to face-to-face therapy in most cases
- Telehealth allows greater ability to train caregivers and support personnel in support of client's goal carryover
- Primary benefit reported across studies was improved access to care
- Barriers to implementation of telehealth services: issues with technology, acceptance by professionals

Research

Lincoln, M. et al. (2014) Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives on Teletherapy Delivery of Speech Pathology Services in Rural Schools: A Preliminary, Qualitative Investigation, *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*

- Interviews of parents, school principals and therapy facilitators related to pilot teletherapy program in rural community
- Parents who attended their child's teletherapy sessions reported they had also gained skills in supporting their child's communication
- Despite some issues with technology (Adobe Connect used during this pilot program), overall response was that teletherapy was "highly acceptable"

Research

McDuffie et al (2016) Early Language Intervention Using Distance Video-Teleconferencing: A Pilot Study of Young Boys With Fragile X Syndrome and Their Mothers, *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* (2016)

- Preliminary support for the efficacy of telehealth format of parent-implemented language intervention; as parents are present and involved during therapy session, they are better trained and prepared to embed language teaching into naturally occurring routines and activities.

- Remote therapy with child in home setting means that intervention is occurring in child's naturalistic environment, leading to greater opportunities for immediate practice and carryover of skills.

What Is Telepractice?

ASHA:

Telepractice is the application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology and audiology professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client/patient or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.

The use of telepractice does not remove any existing responsibilities in delivering services, including adherence to the Code of Ethics, Scope of Practice in Audiology and Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology, state and federal laws (e.g., licensure, HIPAA), and ASHA policy.

TAC §111.212 (k) As pertaining to liability and malpractice issues, a provider shall be held to the same standards of practice as if the telehealth services were provided in person.

Why Telepractice?

- Addresses nationwide SLP shortage
  - According to a recent survey, 65% of undergraduate and graduate participants indicated a preference to work in a healthcare setting rather than a school-based setting, even though 52.6% of SLPs were employed in school-based settings in 2015. This discrepancy may further perpetuate shortage of SLPs in schools.
  - 2015-2016 Educator Supply and Demand report indicates that all US states, including TX, indicate some degree of shortage related to speech-language pathologists.
- Reduces caseloads for on-site SLPs, providing opportunity for improved overall quality of therapy
- Removes geographic barriers
  - Reduces or eliminates travel time for on-site SLPs
  - Reduces district loss of FTE time to travel
- Increased opportunity to bring SLPs with specialized training to students with specific needs (e.g., bilingual therapy, AAC, ASL certified, etc.)

The Basics

High-quality telepractice requires

- Provision of therapy by a qualified, appropriately licensed and experienced clinician
- Knowledge of ASHA guidelines as well as state regulations and requirements related to telepractice in schools
- Sufficient internet bandwidth
- Adequate equipment and technology support
- Site/home support of service delivery model

Advantages

Provider:

- More flexibility in scheduling, assisting with a work/life balance
- Provider can focus specifically on therapy and related clinical responsibilities
- Smaller group sizes, or individual sessions, allowing for more focused and targeted work, helping students to meet their IEP goals faster

Student:

- Smaller group sizes (2-4 students), allowing for more individualized attention
- Students motivated by computer-based activities
- Reinforcement of computer literacy and fluency

Student Challenges

- Client candidacy
  - Physical/sensory
  - Cognitive/behavioral
  - Communication
  - Support services
- Student behaviors
- Tactile/sensory cueing
- Chronic absences

System and Technology Challenges

Basic challenges:
- Lack of access to necessary equipment: computer, headset with boom mic, webcam
- Inferior internet speeds
- Absence of plan for troubleshooting when issues arise

Additional considerations:
- Is computer set aside specifically for telepractice sessions?
- Will other students be disrupting during session?
- What video conferencing tool will be used? Is it encrypted? Can it handle group therapy sessions? Is it HIPAA compliant?
- Does the school employ firewalls that might block therapy-appropriate websites?

Site Challenges

- Location of services: Where within the school will provide a quiet and semi-private area with a hard-wired connection?
- Identification of a reliable Primary Support Person to assist the children during sessions
- Communication with staff can be challenging if teachers aren't well-informed and in support of the service delivery modality

Virtual Student Challenges

- Working with school staff
- Working with families
- Student focus
- Technology
- Attendance!

Establish expectations from the beginning!

Clinician Challenges

While the therapy provided online by licensed SLPs is comparable to face-to-face therapy in terms of being evidence-based and IEP-goal directed, telepractice brings its own set of challenges for clinicians.

- Physical environment
  - Clinician's
  - Student's
- Licensure requirements
- Completing evaluations
- Communicating with site and district staff
- Access to therapy materials

Scenarios, Questions and Discussion

References

Reference 1 2015 Educator and Supply Demand Report, American Association for Employment in Education

Reference 2 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2005). *Telepractice: Key Issues* [Client/Patient Selection]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.

Reference 3 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2015). *Highlights and Trends: Member and affiliate counts, year-end 2015*. Retrieved from http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/2015-Member-Counts.pdf

Reference 4 Tucker, J. (2012) Perspectives of Speech-Language Pathologists on the Use of Telepractice in Schools. *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*, Fall 4(2): 47-60
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4296829/#h4-v4n2-art-10.5195-ijt.2012.6102

Reference 5 Leonard et al (2016) Emerging Practice Preferences of Speech-Language Pathology Students, *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders*, Fall (43): 285-298

Reference 6 Lincoln, M. et al. (2014) Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives on Teletherapy Delivery of Speech Pathology Services in Rural Schools: A Preliminary, Qualitative Investigation, International Journal of Telerehabilitation

Reference 7 Molini-Avejonas, et al, A Systematic Review of the Use of Telepractice in Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences *Journal of Telemed Telecare* (2015)

Reference 8 McDuffie et al (2016) Early Language Intervention Using Distance Video-Teleconferencing: A Pilot Study of Young Boys With Fragile X Syndrome and Their Mothers, *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* Fall; 6(2): 65–74