Telehealth Tips for Providers

Setting the Scene

- Please build on best safety practices from onsite clinics. Remind families of confidentiality and its limits. Remember to follow documentation best practices. Identify the family call-back telephone number and local emergency service contact ahead of time.
- Minimize distractions in your work space and encourage patients and caregivers to do the same (e.g., remove items in view of the camera, turn off or silence cell phones, and remove games, toys, and pets).
- Check the video screen to make sure the patient is able to see your facial expressions.
- Maintain your gaze into the camera, and minimize looking at your computer or notes.
- If available, use the "picture-in-picture" feature, which allows you to see both yourself and the patient. This can help you monitor your environment.
- Use clinical judgement to facilitate patient comfort and privacy:
    1. Younger patients may prefer sitting closer to the video device.
    2. Consider utilizing text/chat functions embedded within the telehealth system should a patient feel uncomfortable with full video.

Introducing Patients to Telehealth

The following recommendations should be tailored to patient population:

- Ask if the patient has ever met with a health care provider over the phone or via computer. Be prepared to explain key differences and similarities to more common technologies such as FaceTime and Skype.
- Emphasize that this technology is HIPAA compliant and that no one else has access to the session.
- Explain to the patient why telehealth is being used. "Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, providers are meeting with patients via this technology to help keep everyone as healthy as possible."
- As appropriate, review information about mandatory disclosures.
- Ask patients where they are located (if the session is not located at a clinic) and confirm they are in a private setting to talk.
- Ask or confirm the emergency emergency contact number in case crisis interventions are needed.
- If technical difficulties arise, be ready to address them with the patient.
- If video stops and you are concerned about safety or overall health emergencies, call back-up phone number. If you cannot reach the patient or emergency contact, call emergency services.
- Provide patients the opportunity to ask questions about the telehealth technology and discuss the challenges and positives at the beginning and throughout the treatment course.

Building Rapport

- Provide opportunities for patients to speak and/or assert control over the conversation, particularly when it's a telephone session
- Use summary statements, reflections, and observations frequently to show that you are listening.
- Seek more verbal confirmations of mutual understanding of what is being done in treatment
- Tentative language when interpreting patients' statements, open-ended questions, and figurative language may be helpful when conducting an initial session online.
- Mirror the language patterns of the pattern when appropriate
- Simply have a conversation with the patient! This is shown to be a reliable rapport builder, even over telehealth.

Keeping Youth Engaged

- Utilize your technology platform (Check with technology services at your site):
  1. Have kids show their art work on the camera or use screen share options to create art together.
  2. Share handouts and work through them in session (e.g., Zoom screen share with editable documents such as word).
  3. Use other features (e.g., Zoom has a "whiteboard" feature where a patient and clinician can draw together or play tic-tac-toe).
- Recruit caregivers to help with engagement.
- Ask parents to prepare toys for their child and to avoid loud, noisy toys.
- Use exaggerated expressions and gestures if needed to engage the youth (virtual high 5s, thumbs up, etc.).
- Ask questions to engage your patient
  1. Ask younger kids to share their favorite things about home, toys, books, etc.
  2. Ask older kids to share any art, journaling, music, etc.
  3. Consider taking turns to ask and answer questions to let your patient get to know you and to gather information on the patient. For example: "What is your favorite TV show?", "What is your favorite color?"
- Help patients adjust to telehealth
  1. If a child has difficulty remaining in the frame, consider keeping the caregivers in frame and call the child back to the camera when they need to answer a question.
  2. If a child refuses to sit within the camera frame,
     (1) Use typical behavior management strategies
     (2) Ask the caregiver to turn off the self-monitor image and seat the youth farther away from the camera so as to remain in the frame
     (3) Allow the youth to have more privacy for part of all of the session