



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

Telepractice Ethics, Licensure, and Reimbursement

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ASHA's Definition

- Telepractice is the application of telecommunications technology at a distance by linking clinician to client, or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.
 - ASHA 2004 position statement
www.asha.org/telepractice.htm



What Telepractice Is Not

- Distance supervision or mentoring
 - Clinical Fellows (allowed by CFCC)
 - Students (up to university)
 - Assistants (no guidance from ASHA; check with state)
- Distance education



Necessary Clarifications

- Does it assume audio and visual connection?
- Are there specific standards?
- What service is being provided, e.g.:
 - Synchronous (real time) connection with qualified provider?
 - Access to online materials?
 - Self-paced programs?
 - Clinician-monitored programs?



Quality of Service

- Telepractice (telehealth) is an appropriate model of service delivery for the profession of speech-language pathology [and audiology]... **The quality of the services delivered via telepractice must be consistent with the quality of services delivered face-to-face.”**

--Position Statement



What is a Quality Service?

- Technology and connection appropriate for the service being delivered
- Counseling and involvement of others (parents, staff, administration)
- Appropriate documentation
- Conforms to ASHA Code of Ethics, Scope of Practice, and other official policies



Ethical/Legal Issues

- Appropriateness of clients for telespeech
- Competence of SLP to provide telespeech
 - See Knowledge and Skills, 2005
- Notification—particularly of minors or cognitively impaired clients
- Privacy
 - Environment



Other Issues

- Credentialing (hospital networks)
 - Joint Commission telemedicine requirements
- Consent/notification
- Malpractice



Licensure

- States showing interest in developing language
- Some have added (MD); others waiting (TX)
- Issue: full license required across states?
- Risks of licensure language: too restrictive
- ASHA creating model language
- NCSB discussing issues



Status of Reimbursement for Telehealth

- School contracts
- Medicaid
- Private insurance
- Medicare



School Contracts

- Prompted by shortages of SLPs and distances to rural school districts (e.g., ME, ND, OK, TX, NC)
- State Departments of Education engaging in partnering (e.g., Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia)
- Issues: need for good communication with teachers & facilitators; competition for bandwidth



Medicaid:

www.cms.hhs.gov/Telemedicine

- “Telemedicine is viewed as a cost-effective alternative to the more traditional face-to-face way of providing medical care.” (Medicaid Overview)
- 23 states have regulations for reimbursement of telemedicine services
- Recently approved in Oklahoma for schools, including facility fee
- Available in Missouri when approved through Missouri Telehealth Network—in most settings except for schools



Private Health Plans

- Recommend obtaining advance approval
- Examples
 - Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Dakota
 - Private insurer in Utah on case by case basis
- State laws mandating that private insurance reimburse covered services if provided via telehealth (Maine: LD 1073; NH SB 138)



Medicare

- SLPs and Audiologists not included as eligible telehealth providers under Medicare
- ASHA submitted application to add SLPs and audiologists as providers in 2003
- Collaborating with ATA and other organizations to add language for pilot program on stroke



ASHA's Activities

- 1998 staff white paper
- 2001-2003 Focused Initiative
 - Grants, Medicare application, ASHA Leader, survey
- 2004-2005 Ad Hoc Committee: Policy documents
- 2007 Video and brochure
- 2008-2009 Ad Hoc Committee: Professional Issues document



ASHA's Advocacy

- Part of ASHA's Public Policy Agenda
- Work with state associations on Medicaid advocacy
- Identify states with telepractice mentioned in licensure law
 - Trend chart
(<http://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/StateLicensureTrends.htm>)
- Work with other organizations on Medicare advocacy



ASHA's Resources

- Web page: <http://www.asha.org/practice/telepractice/>
 - Policy documents
 - Bibliography
 - Streaming video
 - Leader articles featuring applications of telepractice in SLP and audiology
 - Other organizations



Other Resources

- American Telemedicine Association
 - Telerehab Special Interest Group
 - Practice guidelines from other professions
 - Reimbursement information; advocacy
- C-Tel (Center for Telehealth and eHealth Law)
 - Brown bag seminars
- Office for the Advancement of Telehealth
- Association of Telehealth Service Providers



For More Information



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