Expanding Access: Telehealth and Innovative Strategies for Patient-Centered Care

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Presenters

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Session Objectives

1. Name at least two best practices for successful telehealth implementation.

2. Identify at least one strategy for ensuring equitable access to telehealth services for underserved and marginalized communities.

3. Identify at least one strategy for clinicians to use to enhance patient engagement.

Telehealth Best Practices

Systems and Implementation

- Consider electronic platforms with telehealth capacity that are connected to EMR's scheduling calendar
- Scheduled trainings and office hours to support staff in navigating the telehealth system
- Reminder system integration for appointment reminders (that can be sent automatically and manually)
- Ensure there are multiple ways to share the telehealth link (clinicians, front desk staff)
- Integrate a telehealth consent into the process with ability to sign electronically, helpful to utilize clinical staff to review consent, address concerns and potential barriers

Pros and Cons of Telehealth

Pros

- Balance competing priorities, like childcare and work
- Reduction in barriers, such as transport and time
- Care from own environment supports trauma-informed care
- Promotes low barrier treatment

Cons

- Technology challenges for patients
- Some patients may not have technology, access to Wifi, or minutes
- May not have access to a safe, private space – confidentiality concerns
- Increased admin, which might increase provider fatigue/burnout
- Ethical challenges arise

Increasing Access: Meeting People Where They Are

Bringing care to patients instead of requiring patients to come to treatment

- Prioritizes the goals, needs, and preferences of those we serve
- “How would you like us to support you?”
- Telehealth supports new ways to provide traditional care
- Allows for connection when psychosocial barriers prevent in-person meetings (why cancel when you can telehealth?)

Creating Workflows

When building workflows, consider:

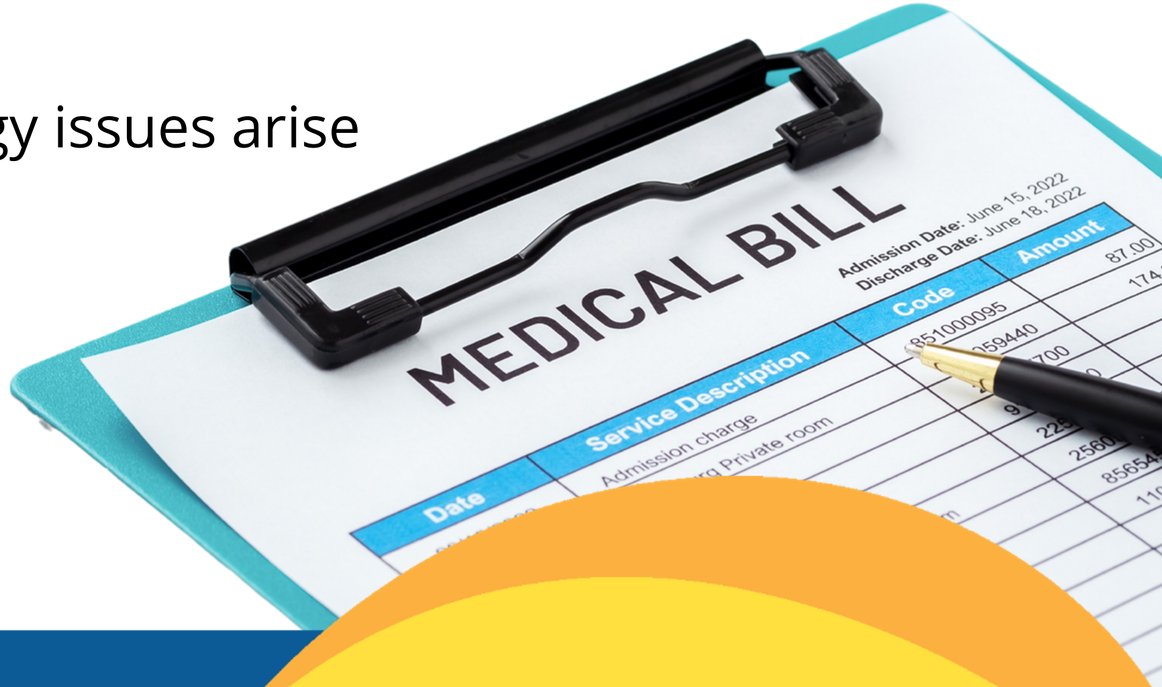
Telehealth Toolkit

- Include pilot testing with super users/pilot clinicians
- Develop processes for obtaining consent
- System wide training – embed in ongoing orientation for new staff
- Guides for staff & patient
- Ongoing support for staff
- Develop policies for assessing safety and responding to crises
- Determining safety, location, and confidentiality at the start of each session/group
- Support staff in responding to boundary violations

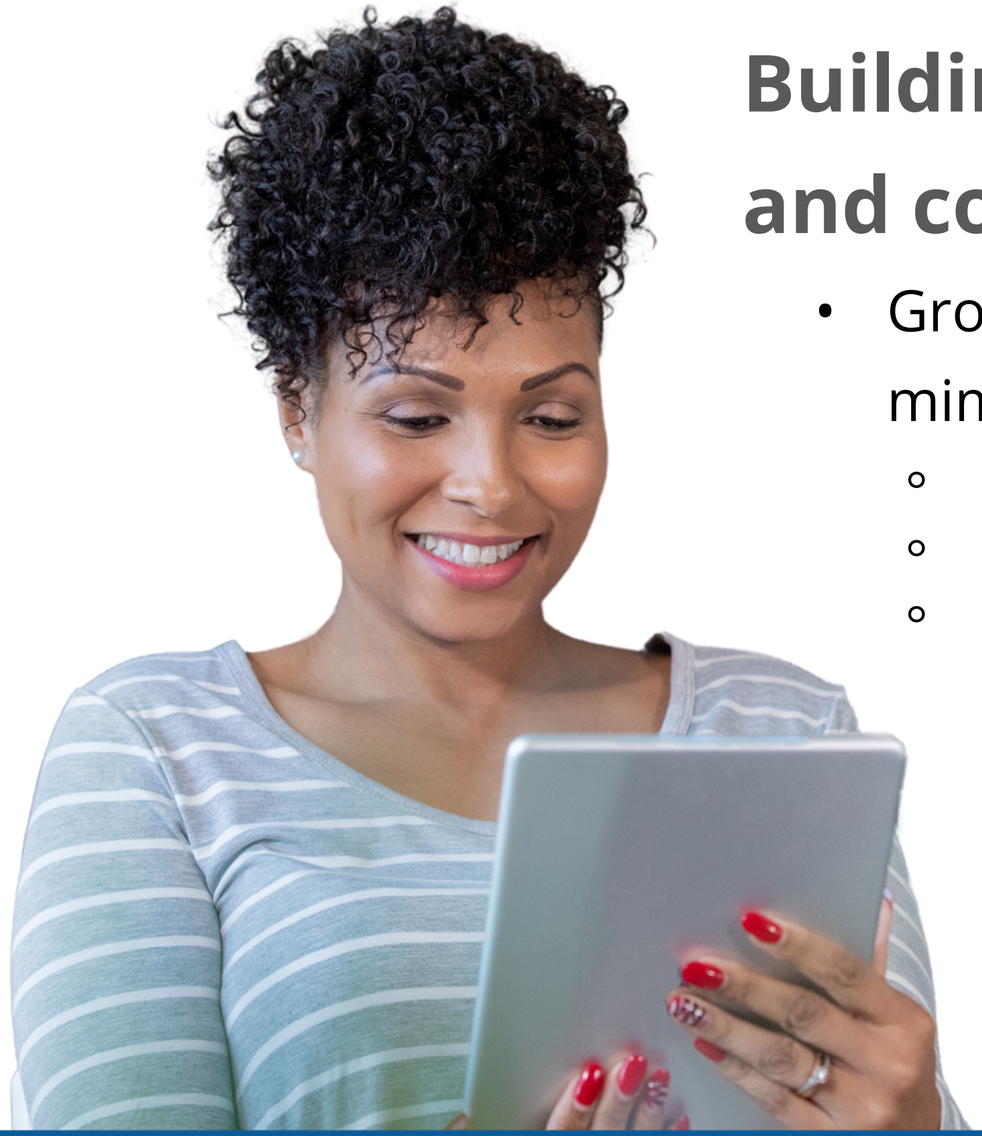
Telehealth Billing

Building a system that supports billing and compliance needs

- Develop workflows that auto-populate billing add on codes for telehealth + ensure accuracy of time in and time out
- Ability to track reasons why telehealth was audio only for compliance with standards
- Available access to support when technology issues arise



Telehealth Groups



Building a system that supports billing and compliance needs

- Group process that was used in-person should be mimicked virtually
  - Using structure and curricula
  - Be clear about expectations and rules
  - Expectations should be the same as in-person groups, with an emphasis on boundaries and confidentiality

Technology Considerations

Choosing the right solution

- How big is your organization?
- Is your intention to provide individual sessions, group sessions, or both?
- How does a patient connect?
- What equipment does the provider need to connect?
- Does it integrate with your EHR?
- Can patients sign documents through the system?
- How much control do providers have over group settings?

Understand that one size doesn’t fit all and that a perfect solution doesn’t exist.

Responding to Technology Barriers

How can we support equitable access?

- First, we support our own teams with training! The more comfortable the staff is with the platforms, the more able we are to help patients
- Train clinicians to use both their end and the patients'
- Train front desk to support telehealth on site

Example: QI project at one OTP

- One OTP completed an initiative to increase access to telehealth services for patients who:
  - Couldn't use technology
  - Didn't have access to Wi-Fi
  - Have no space in their home to complete sessions
- Staff set up 3 onsite rooms that had technology to allow for telehealth services, supported by staff to model and support
- This resulted in increased understanding of telehealth platform, reduced frustration
- More patients able to complete telehealth sessions successfully at home

Balance Patient Risk and Access

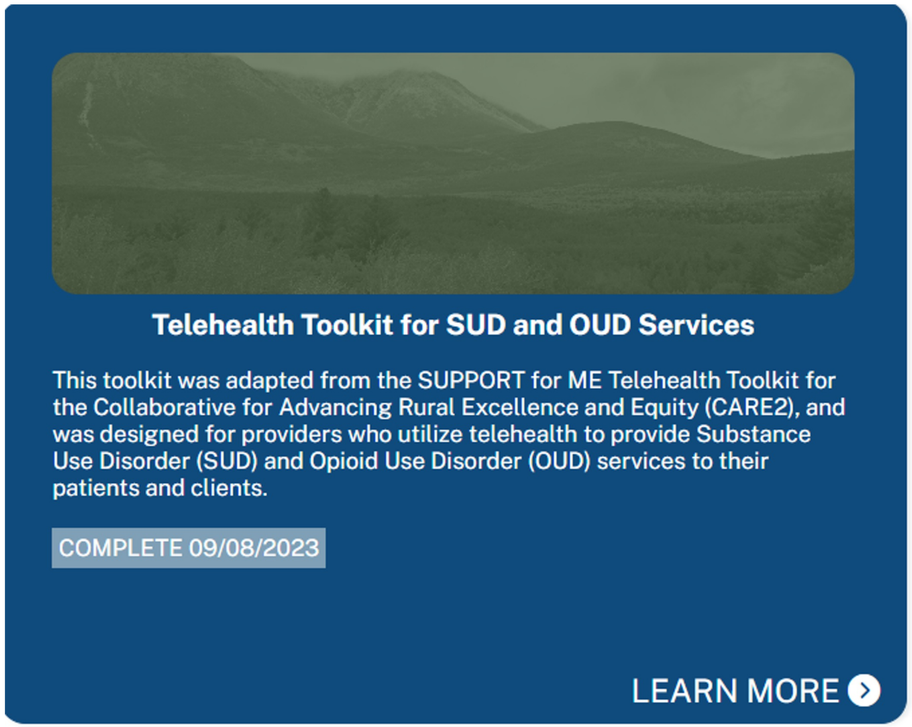
Typical monitoring may be reduced when a client receives telehealth services

- Isolation is dangerous - increased likelihood of substance use alone increases the risk of overdose
- **Overdose prevention plans should include whether or not a patient is telehealth, and ways to access supports like Safe Spot**
- For higher-risk patients with low engagement, encourage some in-person connection: “It’s been a while since we have connected in person. Can I help set up transportation for some of our sessions?”

Resources

Check out the NETRC Telehealth Classroom!

https://www.telehealthclassroom.org/



Thank you!

Questions?