NEW COVID-19 Resources

We recently updated our website, heartlandtrc.org with resources you can use to help navigate the changing telehealth landscape. Resources include toolkits, fact sheets, ongoing webinars, and CDC guidance that provide guidance on telehealth adoption, meaning behind new policy, and what health professionals are doing to meet the growing demand of reaching more people through telehealth services.

You can access the resources, here. Please share with others who could benefit from the information. We will continue to add resources as they come available so keep checking back.

Reaching more people through telehealth during COVID-19 and beyond

The National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers recently hosted a webinar that was watched by more than 5,000 professionals looking for ways to expand their capacity to reach more patients during the coming months. Below are a few take away points from the webinar. You can still access the webinar, here.

**It’s time to get resourceful**

New temporary changes to federal regulations are meant to help you do that. COVID-19 has forced systems to move from strategic growth in one program direction to now serving every patient. It’s important to have discussions on the best ways to quickly scale up and reach more people. Think of how to use telephones, texting, and how to reach patients who have not consented to using these modes of communication before. Consider web-based and link-based services providers can use to easily expand to reach more people.

**Technology is not one size fits all**

Technology needs will look different based on a facility or practices need. If you
If you have specific questions, the Telehealth Technology Assessment Center is a good resource for questions about technology related to telehealth. It's important to think about what your specific tech needs will be in the future. Many TRCs are working to expand their technology resources rapidly.

CMS relaxed the technology requirement of 'secured and encrypted' in order to assist providers to serve patients quickly. Due to the urgent need, everyday communication types, such as FaceTime and Skype are allowed without HIPAA penalty during this COVID-19 response. However, whenever possible, utilize secure, encrypted technologies to deliver telehealth now and into the future. It's also important to know that some states did not waive their HIPAA requirements.

Most platforms use end to end encryption, but if you're choosing a new platform make sure to sign a business associates' agreement to ensure that company will safe guard patient information. When choosing a platform think about its scalability for the short term. Is it reliable? Can it handle increasing traffic? Is it easy to use for people who are new to technology?

You still need to keep state regulations in mind
CCHP has a helpful interactive policy map that specifies state laws and reimbursement policies. The new regulations at the federal level apply to Medicare. Two big take aways are that geographic and site limitations are temporarily waived, so all geographic locations now qualify and other locations can act as originating sites. Who can be eligible providers did not change. While OCR has given guidance, state requirements for where you reside still apply. The webinar goes into reimbursement codes for different services.

The webinar covers the above points in more depth and is worth watching if you want to hear how professionals in the field are responding to COVID-19. It's important to have these discussions as this will likely change how we communicate and care for patients in the future.

Please mark your calendars for the NCTRCs April webinar, hosted by Heartland Telehealth Resource Center

"COVID-19 and Telebehavioral Responses Across the Lifespan"
April 16, 1pm (CST). With the COVID-19 pandemic, telebehavioral health can meet needs around pandemic-specific adjustment, anxiety, and grief, as well as meet ongoing clinical needs. A telebehavioral health panel will address practical considerations with expanded in-home telebehavioral services during the outbreak. Learn more about the upcoming webinar on the NCTRC website.

Please stay tuned for more webinar details through the National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers, [https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/](https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/)
Challenges still exist after telemedicine adoption

Kansas legislature passed a bill in 2018 to expand telemedicine. Now, insurance companies are required to cover treatment given over video hook-ups. However, challenges remain for smaller hospitals due to uncertainty around telemedicine.

Many hospitals are still unsure on how much reimbursement they can receive from insurance companies for care involving telemedicine. Second, many rural hospitals do not have broadband wired in, making it a challenge to get a reliable connection. Lastly, hospital administrators worry about the start-up costs associated with adopting telemedicine.

Janine Gracy, program director for Heartland Telehealth Resource Center encourages hospitals to take the next step in adopting telemedicine practices, she says, "If you have a smartphone, if you have an iPad, if you have a laptop, if you have a desktop with a camera and speakers, you can do telemedicine," she said. “You don't have to go out and buy a robot in order to offer telemedicine.”

Additionally, due to the growing need for telemedicine during the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary CMS waivers for providing care have been adopted and carriers are working to expand coverage to underserved areas. If you have specific questions about adopting telemedicine, contact us.

To read more on the story, visit kcur.org.
HTRC Webinar Series:
Opioids and Substance Use Treatment
April 7
12-1 p.m. CST

Technological solutions have been tapped as one tool in developing a humane response to the opioid crisis. Join Shane Hudson MS, LCP, LCAC, CEO of CKF Addiction Treatment to learn how they are using technology to help clients find recovery.

As President and CEO of CKF Addiction Treatment, Shane is responsible for overall agency analysis, strategy, and innovation to serve CKF’s patients as services expand into the future. An update will be provided on current regulation and policy changes in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The Heartland Telehealth Resource Center will present a series of webinars on May 5, June 2, July 7 and August 4. Update will be provided on current regulation and policy changes in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

There is no cost to participate in the series, but registration is required. CME and continuing education is available.

Future sessions will cover:
Veterans’ services
New and innovative technology
Nurse practitioners and PAs
State and national requirements update

REGISTER HERE

COVID-19 ECHOs

Missouri Telehealth Network COVID-19 ECHO will meet via Zoom videoconferencing every Monday from noon to 1 p.m. Anyone interested in learning how to protect, diagnose and treat Missouri patients with COVID-19, as well as how to protect their overall community, are encouraged to join. A multidisciplinary expert team led by Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Director Randall Williams, MD, will share the latest developments, answer questions, and discuss management of patient cases presented by participants. Register and learn more here.

Oklahoma State University-Center for Health Sciences has launched a COVID-19 ECHO program for rural clinicians. It will meet via Zoom videoconferencing on Fridays from 12-1:30 p.m. Anyone interested in learning about telemedicine for COVID-19, as well as how to protect their overall community, are encouraged to join. A multidisciplinary expert team from the University will share the latest developments, answer questions, and discuss management of patient cases presented by participants. Register and learn more here.
Oklahoma Update ECHO to keep healthcare providers updated as the situation changes. This ECHO will be held weekly every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8:30 a.m. until further notice. Please register here.

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

There's an upcoming funding opportunities through USDA: Rural Development.

**Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant**

Due date: April 10, 2020

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine program helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. For example, this program can link teachers and medical service providers in one area to students and patients in another. For the more information about the 2020 program, please register for one of our informational webinars on March 3, 2020. All upcoming events will be posted on the events program tab.