

The Benefits of Telehealth Therapy



Bold Pediatric Therapy Center
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History of Telehealth Therapy

- Not a covered service for non-physician based care
 - Non-physician based services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, nutrition support, & counselling
 - Not reimbursable through State & Federal funded insurance plans
- Oregon licensing board are leaders the USA in established telehealth regulations and guidelines.
- Third party/commercially available health insurance plan specific
 - Member had to investigate individual plan for specific coverage
 - Information is very hard to find on website or handbook
 - Always includes a disclaimer if included in the plan that there is “not a guarantee of payment”

Bold Pediatric Therapy Center

Strategic initiative

Increase access to therapy services for children with special needs who:

- Live in distant locations and do not have local therapy services
- Are medical fragile and can not be easily transported to therapy location
- Do not have transportation options
- Have multiple children with medical diagnoses

COVID Emergency Mandate

March 2020

Gov Brown issued emergency mandate to expand regulations for State Health Plan to ensure payment for therapy services during pandemic.

Federal mandate (HHS) also expanded Medicare coverage and prompted commercial plans to follow suite.

https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html?fbclid=IwAR36IBgo7VXtd67MQ_m9ti7KTBNBSVDVqYQUkEkdIbks9jGgpOswQt2M7Zk

BOLD Pediatric Therapy Center successfully transitioned all patients who chose to continue therapy to virtual telehealth delivery.

568 patients were seen via Bold telehealth within the first 3 weeks of pandemic.

BOLD Pediatric Therapy Center Telehealth Experience & Outcomes

Positive outcomes were noted in developmental, emotional, behavioral, & neurological improvements.

BOLD clinicians were critical during the first months of COVID:

- Clinicians were sometimes the only support available to families
- Provided a point of stability during time of Job/health/nutrition insecurity
- Continued familiar supports for families who lost up to 6-10 hours of professional supports/day
- Maintained access to monitoring of developmental milestones to prompt referral to MD

BOLD Telehealth Therapy Services Delivered in 2020

Speech Therapy :

Language expression and comprehension, sound production, engagement and participation with activities, social interaction, attention, cognition and learning supports, communication to support emotional regulation.

Occupational Therapy :

Regulation of sleep routines, emotional stability, behavior management, feeding challenges and nutrition, cognitive and motor skills for continued development.

Physical Therapy :

Introduced families to activities to implement at home, facilitated developmental motor skills, promoted movement during a time of increased inactivity and indoor restrictions.

Telehealth Outcomes During 2020

Children have made progress towards therapy goals.

Children seeking service have been able to access therapy throughout the “stay-at-home” period.

Children with challenges have successfully graduated away from therapy during this time of crises.

Telehealth has proved to be an effective delivery option:

- Therapists have been reimbursed for in-home and community presence to meaningfully address functional goals.
- Telehealth is a technique with a neurological benefit that can be highly successful for some diagnoses. (Impact on visual and mirror neuron systems)

Access To Therapy

- ✓ This unforeseen opportunity to deliver via telehealth in 2020 has provided increased access to therapy service
- ❖ Throughout this pandemic the rules, guidelines & reimbursement for telehealth therapy has been uncertain and unpredictable
- Different health insurers established different timelines for covering telehealth services.
- ❑ As of today, insurers have not communicated a decision to continue telehealth coverage for therapy services after 31 December 2020

Reimbursement of Future Telehealth Therapy

- We advocate for the continued access and payment for telehealth delivery of therapy services.
- We believe that our experience during the COVID pandemic of 2020 has provided evidence that telehealth is an effective delivery system.
- This experience has proved that the services delivered by ***every member*** of the healthcare team, non just the physician, are essential for the health and wellbeing of children and families.
- Establish telehealth as a reimbursed delivery system for therapy, in all health insurance plans, to significantly improve our healthcare system.
- Ensure that reimbursement has parity with other delivery systems, as the knowledge and expertise of providers remain consistent.

The State of Oregon Legislature is the leader in healthcare services

The year of 2020 has provided you, our state leaders, with *evidence* and *the opportunity* to ensure all Oregonians **Continue to have access to therapy supports** in the future.

We look forward to joining you to make this possible.

Thank you

The BOLD Therapy team and families