

Telehealth Tip Sheet: FCT Engagement with Families

As community members practice physical distancing due to the COVID-19, community-based service workers are increasing the use of telehealth with individuals and families. Research has shown us that child abuse, substance abuse, and partner violence increases during times of crisis. It is more important now than ever to provide support to families who may face barriers to accessing services. A way of still providing services when not physically together can be accomplished with the use of telehealth.

REVIEW OF FCT GUARENTEES

For FCT families, trust takes on a new meaning. The rapport we established in person needs to be shifted to accommodate the new session setting. Clinicians should take time in their first telehealth session to carefully, thoughtfully and specifically define the FCT guarantees. Your families need to know what they can expect from you.

1. I promise that I will care and respect your family enough to give you direct and honest feedback.
2. Likewise, I will ask you for direct and honest feedback.
3. When I make a mistake, I will acknowledge it, take responsibility for it and make it right.
4. You are the expert on your family.
5. I promise to ask your permission first to do any activity with your child.
6. I promise to include you in any contacts I have with other agencies involved with your family.

Remember your families are used to having you come to their homes, now suddenly everything is over video or phone. If this is a new case, please be mindful that your families may not know how to share vulnerable/personal information over video chat. It may feel strange for them. All of this is completely normal, and you should normalize this for families.

TRANSITIONING CURRENT FAMILIES INTO TELEHEALTH

- After reviewing the FCT Guarantees with the family don't jump right into where you left off
- Create family rules for a safe place in the home for individual sessions and where most family sessions will occur
- Join with the family by playing a fun engaging game like "Teletherapy Scavenger Hunt"
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/64176363427611220/>
- Acknowledge that things feel different and it's ok to verbalize that
- Identify some good things about telehealth – less travel meaning you have more time to meet with the family

HELPING NEW CASES ADJUST TO TELEHEALTH

Just as we would in a face to face intake you want to:

- Identify their perception of the problem
- Elicit their concerns
- Gain their perspective
- Explain the treatment process including FCT process with intensity
- Provide HOPE
- Schedule next appointment
- Expect some awkwardness
- Be flexible: Example – you may not be able to meet one-on-one with the caregiver at intake
- Be creative by sharing your screen to show examples of solution cards, Ecomaps, etc

Don't focus on:

- The difficulties of telehealth – help navigate but don't allow your first session to turn into venting session

END OF SESSION

- Make it a priority to ask, “what was helpful” and “what was not helpful” – this will guide successful future sessions
- Practice writing your notes in session – have the family summarize what they did in session

LOOK AT TELEHEALTH AS A WAY TO HELP WITH SOCIALIZING WHILE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Help your families view telehealth as a way to secure connection and understanding in an environment that can feel isolating right now. Humans are social and we need human interactions. Feelings of fear, isolation, and anxiety are all common in this type of situation, and telehealth is an SOLUTION to help families manage their mental health and stay connected with the care that is needed. Telehealth also helps nurture current relationships from a distance. Remind yourself and your families that relationships with others and emotional connections will help us get through these difficult times.

WRAP UP

Family needs during time of physical distancing will likely change day to day. Many families may lose supports and services or face modified services therefore become even more at risk. Telehealth options are a promising opportunity to ensure that families receive vital support during these difficult times.