Autism and Teletherapy - How Teletherapy Can Support Communication Skills for students with Autism in ECE.

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Who Is E-Therapy

E-Therapy’s Leadership Team
20 Years Of Teletherapy Experience

- E-Therapy is a national leader in Teletherapy
- Providing Related Services since 2009, including:
  - Speech Therapy
  - Counseling/Social Work
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Physical Therapy
- E-Therapy has many years experience providing intervention and related services for early childhood education throughout the United States.

Who Is E-Therapy: Our Reach

- E-Therapy provides services across the country
- E-Therapy serves all types of schools and students
- Therapists have state licensure & background checks

200,000+ Teletherapy Sessions
100s Of Therapists
We Work At 100s Of Schools
100s Of Students
Welcome / Today’s Goal

✓ Why Early Intervention is Important
   We will discuss teletherapy, the issues PreK students with Autism face, and how technology/teletherapy activities (over the computer) support communication skills for children with Autism.

✓ How Teletherapy Benefits Students with Autism
   Learn the benefits of Early Intervention for Students with Autism.

✓ Learn Strategies To Support Teletherapy
   Learn Teletherapy strategies that support speech/language therapy and other therapy services for children in your Early Learning Program ages 3 to 5.

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can affect social communication and behavioral development. ASD is a spectrum disorder which means that each child is affected differently and has unique strengths, challenges, and needs. ASD begins before the age of 3 and lasts throughout a person’s life, although symptoms may improve over time.

Early identification of ASD is important as children and families can attain the services and support they need as soon as possible. With awareness, acceptance, and the appropriate supports, children with ASD can reach their incredible potential.
5 Potential Signs of Autism in Early Childhood Students

Do you have students in your program that display these characteristics?

1. Sensitivity to lights and sound
2. Lack of play skills
3. Difficulty participating in group activities
4. Lack of eye contact
5. Difficulty understanding emotions

Why Early Intervention is Important

Why is Early Intervention Important?
- Brain is most capable of change in the early developmental stage
- Sets students up for future success in the classroom
- More effective and less costly than delayed intervention
- Improves academic and social outcomes as well as quality of life
- Improves challenging behavior and group learning skills

Important Early Childhood Impacts

“Early childhood development is the compelling economic, social, and moral issue of our time,” P&G CEO John Pepper.

10% of ECE Slots must be reserved for children with disabilities

13% Return on Investment when disadvantaged children receive 0 to 5 education

IDEA
Shortage of Services for ECE Students with Autism

Did You Know…

• 49 states report a shortage of Related Service specialists
• 1 in 59 students have Autism Spectrum Disorder
• Autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder, but the most underfunded
• 82% of Special Education Teachers report there are not enough teachers to meet the needs of students with IEP’s.
• 51% of all school districts and 90% of high-poverty schools report having difficulty finding highly qualified SPED teachers.
• Early Intervention programs are some the most severely impacted.

Teletherapy is a Great Solution

Connecting Therapists to Students in Need

• Teletherapy connects therapists to students in need!
• By eliminating the limitations of location we can immediately find therapists who are available to serve students in programs across the country.
• Teletherapy has been proven to be just as effective as in-person therapy.
Defining Teletherapy

What is Teletherapy?
Teletherapy involves the delivery of Speech, Social Work/Counseling, Occupational and Physical Therapy services online via two-way video conferencing (or video chat). Teletherapy links live, licensed therapists to schools and students who may otherwise have difficulty receiving services. Teletherapy is being used in the assessment and treatment of a wide range of disorders.

What Does A Speech Teletherapy Session Look Like

Video Teletherapy Session

Pros and Cons of Teletherapy

Pros
- Teletherapy allows for students to have services who wouldn’t otherwise have access to therapists.
- No commuting time, therapists can see students back to back either in the classroom, or in the privacy of their own home.
- Teletherapy engages students in fun and meaningful ways.

Cons
- Teletherapy is a different modality and requires schools to work outside their comfort zone.
- Technology can be unpredictable so services could be interrupted on occasion.
- Early Learning Centers need to provide an aide to assist in therapy.
Teletherapy: Some Key Points

❖ Practitioner Expertise
  • Access to staff with greater degrees of experience in specific areas: i.e. stuttering, cognitive delays, phonological disorders

❖ Flexibility in Delivering Services
  • Flexible scheduling during the school day
  • Flexible scheduling at off hours: evenings, weekends

❖ Reaches More Children
  • Reaches kids outside of the school setting: i.e. home schooled, sick, non-traditional students

A Parent's Experience With Teletherapy

Video Parent's Testimonial

ASHA & Teletherapy

❖ Approved Teletherapy in 2005

“The use of telepractice does not remove any existing responsibilities in delivering services, including adherence to the Code of Ethics, Scope of Practice, state and federal laws (e.g., licenses, HIPAA, etc.), and ASHA policy documents on professional practice. Therefore, the quality of services delivered via telepractice must be consistent with the quality of services delivered face-to-face.”

❖ ASHA has determined telepractice is appropriate for the application and is helpful in overcoming barriers of access caused by distance, unavailability of specialists and/or sub-specialists, and impaired mobility.

❖ Furthermore, telepractice can extend clinical services to remote, rural, and underserved populations and culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Teletherapy - A Not-So-Big Technology Evolution

- Teletherapy is a very simple technology today
  - Works on legacy computers
  - Doesn’t require high bandwidths
  - Everyone is comfortable with streaming video on
    platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Netflix, Facetime, and many more!
- You really just need: a basic computer, webcam, & headset

Digital Immigrant Versus Digital Native

- The young generation are “Native speakers” of the
digital language of computers, videos, video games,
social media and other sites on the internet

Importance of The Digital Native

- New Forms Of Communication
- New Achievements
- Expand New Opportunities

How Computers Help Students with Autism

Benefits of Computers for ASD Students

- ASD students use computers to learn emotional recognition
- Evidence suggests that special-needs software programs help individuals improve in academics as well as social and communication skills
- Technology helps students with ASD develop a positive self-image and improved self-esteem

*Cited Sources
The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/26/computer-geeks-autism
Specific ECE Students with Autism Teletherapy Examples

From E-Therapy SLP Vivian:

Max (name changed) was a super cute 4 year old diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. He could yell and laugh but was non-verbal. Initially Max had very limited attention skills, and his mom reported that he would have multiple meltdowns each day. Small things would set Max off, and changes in the community were very difficult. He rarely tolerated being around anyone other than his parents and siblings. During teletherapy Max began to make progress in his ability to pay attention. He also began to imitate mom and me during practice with animal sounds. He loved to do animal activities during the therapy sessions and learned to sing along with "Old MacDonald's Farm." Max continued to improve in his ability to express himself, and as his communication improved his meltdowns began to decrease. Max's mom was thrilled when he was able to stay for church with minimal meltdowns. Eventually he was able to sing the ABC's, identify increasing vocabulary items— including some animals, numbers, and colors. He developed the ability to request preferred food items, and at last report was able to make complete sentences!

Specific ECE Students with Autism Teletherapy Examples

From E-Therapy SLP Jill:

When I started with E-Therapy two years ago, I was assigned to work with Jessica (name changed). Jessica has autism and was primarily non-verbal except for imitating single words on occasion. She had a goal from her previous school to attend to task for two minutes at a time. As someone who was new to teletherapy, I have to admit that in the back of my mind I was thinking, "Can this format really work for this student?" When we began working together Jessica would take a movement break every few minutes during our sessions, but in just our 4th session together she stayed at the computer, sat, and attended for the entire 30 minutes. It was amazing! Now, in our 3rd school year working together, Jessica consistently attends and participates for all 30 minute sessions. We have worked up to spontaneous utterances of 4-5 words in length. Jessica will greet me by name and say goodbye with just a small cue, and it melts my heart. So... can teletherapy work for a student like Jessica? YES! The technology/game/interactive format we provide is so motivating and engaging for our students, and most of all effective!

Tools and Strategies for Working With Students with Autism

❖ Basic Social Skills
❖ Daniel's Tea Party: This game can be utilized to target basic social skills, such as taking turns and thinking of the needs of others.
❖ http://pbskids.org/daniel/games/tea-party/
Activity Examples

Website Demonstration

Tools and Strategies for Working With Students with Autism

❖ Appropriate Interactions
❖ Elmo’s School Friends: This activity helps students work through social scenarios they might encounter during center time/group play at school.
❖ [http://pbskids.org/sesamegames/elmsschoolfriends/](http://pbskids.org/sesamegames/elmsschoolfriends/)

Activity Examples

Website Demonstration
Tools and Strategies for Working With Students with Autism

- **Facial Expressions**
  - Robby the Robot: Therapists can utilize this game to help young students with Autism identify emotions and the corresponding facial expressions.
  - [http://www.whizkidgames.com](http://www.whizkidgames.com)

Activity Examples

Website Demonstration

Understanding Facial Expressions

- Use of the webcam during teletherapy sessions can facilitate practice with facial expressions
- You can practice in the same way using a mirror in the classroom setting
Incorporation of AAC onsite and/or onscreen

- Many students with Autism utilize a communication device or picture cards to facilitate their expression, and this can be incorporated into the sessions.
- If the student has a device they can simply use the buttons on the device to communicate during the session.
- The therapist can also use icons on the screen to help the student learn basic communication skills.

Activity Example

Website Demonstration:
https://www.funbrain.com/pre-k-and-k-playground

Activity Example

Website Demonstration:
The therapist can help the student to expand their communication with other visuals, such as "I want..." or...
Benefits of Teletherapy

- **Use of on-screen visuals**: No need to print, cut out, and laminate picture cards. Updating and changing the visuals is easy with digital pictures.

- **Facilitate eye contact**: Teletherapy can reduce the level of pressure because the person is not physically there in front of the student, which can facilitate eye contact.

- **Motivating Activities**: ECE students with Autism can be difficult to engage, and they are often very motivated to participate in computer activities!

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Telepractice and Autism

**Case Studies**

- University of MA, Amherst did two case studies on the difference between receiving teletherapy and table top therapy for students with Autism.

- In both instances Teletherapy proved more effective than table top therapy.

- Clinicians reported that during Teletherapy ASD Students maintained higher levels of focused attention.

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Teletherapy: Journal Findings Table Top vs Telepractice

**International Journal of Tele-Rehabilitation, 3 Year Study**

Key Finding:

- Children who received speech therapy via telepractice achieved the best outcomes, even out-performing the national benchmarks for children from similar diagnostic and demographic backgrounds.
Evidence Based Practices: What It Is & Why It's Important

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

“The goal of EBP is the integration of: (a) clinical expertise/expert opinion, (b) external scientific evidence, and (c) client/patient/caregiver perspectives to provide high-quality services reflecting the interests, values, needs, and choices of the individuals we serve. Conceptually, the trilateral principles forming the bases for EBP can be represented through a simple figure.”

Definition From ASHA

Teletherapy & Evidence Based Practices

❖ EBP is only possible when direct therapy services are administered by a licensed, professional Speech Therapist, which is made possible through the use of weekly, consistent Teletherapy services

❖ The study, Systematic Review of Virtual Speech Therapists for Speech Disorders “…reported the effectiveness of computers as a more engaging type of intervention with more tools to enrich the intervention programs, particularly when it comes to children”

❖ It was emphasized the SLP should be the one providing the intervention and teletherapy is simply the modality to provide the service

❖ “Studies indicate that computer based instruction typically results in benefits such as increased motivation, decreased inappropriate behavior, and increased attention and sometimes results in increased learning compared to traditional methods.”

* Yi Ping, Phoebe Chena, Caddi Johnson, Pooia Lalbakhsha, Terry Caellic, Guang Deng, David Tay, Shane Erickson, Philip Broadbridge
• Received 8 September 2014, Revised 13 August 2015, Accepted 21 August 2015, Available online 4 November 2015. Computer Speech & Language • Volume 37, May 2016, Pages 98 - 128 • Goldsmith & Leblanc, 2004

Teletherapy: Survey Results

Kent State University OMNIE Project in Ohio

Background:
• The Ohio Dept. of Ed had its public schools participate in a Teletherapy pilot project.
• 4 rural school districts participated. Participants were in grades 1 to 5

Findings:

![Survey Results Chart]

82% of Parents rated their experience with teletherapy above average
93% of Students like receiving Speech Language therapy by telepractice
ECE Teletherapy Session

Video Demonstration Actual Session

POLL

Do You Face Service Provider Issues In Your Program?

✓ Do you have Service Providers (SLPs, O'To/Pts, Mental Health Counselors, other…) come into your program and work with your children?

✓ Do you have enough service providers to serve your students within your early childhood program?

✓ If you don’t have adequate services or no services or limited services what does your program do?

➢ The Teletherapy Option?

❖ What is it?

❖ How can it be useful?

❖ Expand your access to licensed professionals who can support your students in your program

❖ Provide students with services they need:

❖ Other???

(show of hands please ☺)
Teletherapy, Key Strategies For Setting Up Your Program

1. Set Expectations
2. Commit Resources
3. Know Documentation
4. Choose Proven Provider
5. Open Communication

- Understand how Teletherapy will work with your program
- Know what you want to get out of using Teletherapy
- Time
- People/Staff/Technology required
- Getting the Program launched on the “right” foot
- IEPs, Progress Reports, Evaluations, Therapy Notes, etc...
- Student Referrals

- Demonstrated Teletherapy track record — References/Referral
- Already works in your state
- Strong industry reputation
- Provides a customized solution to meet your program’s needs
- Resources/Make a commitment to your program; easy to work with reporting, billing, dedicated account management, online access to see all therapy being provided
- Have regular check-in meetings — make sure your provider is checking on the quality of the program and services
- Speak with provider openly and straightforward
- Provide feedback
Thank You / Q&A

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E-Therapy

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