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Forced Into Telepractice With No Idea What To Do Next! The Ins & Outs to Becoming a Teletherapist

Diana Parafiniuk, MS, CCC-SLP

Moderated by:
Amy Hansen, MA, CCC-SLP, Managing Editor, SpeechPathology.com



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continued

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continued

Forced Into Telepractice With No Idea What To Do Next!

The Ins & Outs to Becoming an Expert Teletherapist

Diana Parafiniuk, MS, CCC-SLP

continued

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial: Diana Parafiniuk is co-founder and CMO of E-Therapy LLC, which contracts with schools nationwide to provide telepractice services. She was paid an honorarium for this presentation. Nonfinancial: No relevant relationships to disclose.
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Our Presenter

Diana Parafiniuk Founder of E-Therapy

Diana is a seasoned and nationally recognized business leader in the teletherapy market. Her company, E-Therapy, pioneered the teletherapy industry in education with its innovative practices, services, and solutions and first to market approaches to serve PreK-12 schools and students. Diana received the prestigious Women's Achievers Award awarded from the Arizona Capitol Times for Women who excel in businesses advancing communities and making a difference in people's lives.





Additional Contributors

Megan Magee

Megan is E-Therapy's Teletherapist Trainer/Program Support Administrator. She has 14 years of experience as an ASHA certified speech language-pathologist with 10 years specifically focused on leadership and supervision in virtual education and teletherapy services. Megan has been responsible for training a multitude of therapists transitioning to providing to teletherapy services. Megan holds a Master of Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology from Towson University and a Bachelor of Science in Education with a major in Speech-Language Pathology from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.

Sara Smith

Sara Smith, M.S., CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist and lead product manager with E-Therapy. Sara attended UNC Chapel Hill and the University of North Texas, where she received a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology. She has worked extensively with children and adults on the autism spectrum in schools, group homes, and private clinics. She has experience working as a speech pathologist and supervisor in a variety of settings including school districts, private practice, early childhood intervention, and telepractice. Sara is an independent app developer and has several speech therapy apps available on iTunes. She currently works with E-Therapy to develop new materials and help teletherapists provide effective sessions for their students.



COVID-19 and Telepractice

- Given the current situation with Coronavirus, telepractice is becoming an essential model of service delivery
- Many practitioners who have never considered working with clients online are needing to adopt a telepractice model quickly
- As we continue to navigate the changing landscape, telepractice is likely to become much more of a norm in the fields of healthcare and education

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify 5 important areas of telepractice necessary for successful teletherapy.
- Identify the essential foundations of teletherapy.
- Explain why these telepractice foundations are important to becoming an expert teletherapist.

Outline

Important Foundations of Being an Expert Telepractitioner.

1. Setting Expectations
2. Consistent Organization
3. Scheduling
4. Privacy
5. Tracking and Documentation
6. Integrating Parents and Learning Coaches
7. Coordinating Sessions with Students
8. Technical Difficulties
9. Summary

Common Questions

- ? How complicated is digital organization for telepractice?
- ? What is it like incorporating parents into online therapy, and when and how do you do that?
- ? How often do you keep your clinical data notes, where do you store them and how do you transmit them when working online?
- ? How do you maintain client confidentiality when working in telepractice?

I'm a Teletherapist – Now What?

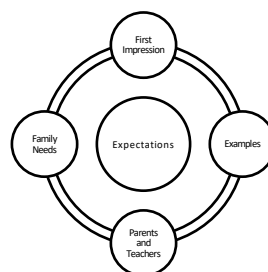
- Transitioning to Online Services
 - Therapy is still therapy – Just like across the table
 - The computer is your friend, how to engage students
- Major Differences in Providing Services
 - You are relying on strong remote communication skills
 - Digital activities, document cameras, manipulatives
- Hidden Advantages
 - The webcam is like a mirror
 - Your group size is smaller
 - An intimate setting when working with students and their parents

Real Questions from Onsite SLPs

- How do you determine if students are appropriate for teletherapy?
- What expectations do I need to set with the students and families?
- Can I use my “hard copy” materials in teletherapy?
- What is the best way to plan for therapy sessions?

Set Expectations at The Start

- Making first impressions with confidence
- Understanding your family’s needs and communicating through a professional demeanor
- Take the time to learn what parents/teachers expect from online sessions
- Offer examples of how you might work with their child or student
- Incorporating parents into therapy how and when



Direct Sessions with Clients



Remember that it is not a different service, it is just a different model of service delivery!

You can complete most all the same types of activities online that you might utilize in your onsite practice, it is just that instead of materials being on the table top, they are on the computer screen.

Q2

Create consistent organization

- Keeping your digital files and hard-copy files organized
- Create profiles for each client and store data
- Set up folders in a secure drive or cloud storage for your clinical data notes
- Write clinical data notes immediately after each session
- Organizing digital links, activities, and interactive work sheets etc...



Free Photo by [Sharon McCutcheon](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Q3

continued

Organizing Your Files Video

continued

Browser Folders Video

Create Your Own Digital Library

- Creating your own digital library is an essential resource to provide teletherapy sessions with seamless transition
- The creation of your digital library can be easy and fun
- There are many different ways to create and keep track of your digital resources including google docs, sheets, excel, and word

“Where are the best places to find materials?”



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Teletherapy Activity Organization Video

(Create Your Own Digital Library)

Schedule for success

“What is the best way to set up my schedule (back to back, little break between, etc.)?”



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- Keeping a calendar and your session calendar updated
- How to use a digital calendar
- Use reminders and notifications to alert you about an upcoming session in various ways—text, email, pop-up—and with multiple timings
- Constant communication

Q4

Digital Calendar Video

Ensure session privacy

- How to utilize online links, keeping them secure
- Assigning individual rooms or meeting appointments for each client to maintain privacy
- Assigning unique passwords
- Understanding how to use digital time stamped logs and where to find that information
- The importance of noting when students arrive and leave your therapy session



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Q5

Tracking and Documenting

- Logging your sessions, how and what to write, how to keep good progress notes when working digitally
- How to make your digital notes available and protected if your team requires them
- The importance of real-time note taking when you are working remotely



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Q6

Integration of Parents or Learning Coaches

- What sessions look like now that your students are working with you from home
- Background interruptions, how to avoid and to deal with them
- When to incorporate a parent or learning coach
- Setting boundaries with students working with you from home

“How do you get parents to “buy into” teletherapy?”



Photo by [Julia M Cameron](#) from [Pexels](#)

Working in a team setting via Telepractice, coordinating sessions with students

- Can you incorporate other therapists into your sessions? How do you coordinate your schedules?
- How to prepare for your team sessions before they take place
- Planning activities when you are working with other service providers online

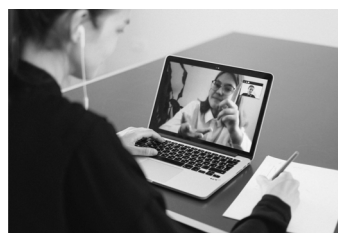


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Communication and Collaboration in the Virtual World

- Maintain HIPAA / FERPA compliance
- Do not use full student names in email
- Ensure privacy when sending documents with student information
 - Password protect docs if sent as an attachment in an email
 - Or work with a company that has a secure online system in place for private transmission of documents



Photo by [Kaitlyn Baker](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Q7

continued

Communication and Collaboration in the Virtual World

- Connect with caregivers and the IEP team by phone/email/face to face online
- You can send materials electronically to parents/teachers for home practice and carry over
- Keep a written communication log (for phone/text/conversation) so that you have documentation for reference if needed
- You may have to take some extra time to establish rapport and get “buy in” from caregivers

Q8

continued

Consultation, Admin & Parent/Learning Coach Support

- You can meet with and collaborate all team members that work with the student.
 - Providing consultation via video conference/phone
 - Sending informational materials and handouts via email so that caregivers can understand and help to implement the concepts you are targeting
 - Collaborating with teachers, school admin, and parents on goals as needed and getting feedback from the team on what is working and what needs to be addressed to help the student be successful

Group Sessions

Methods:

- Students are in the same location (such as at a brick and mortar school) and are sitting side by side at one computer
- Students log on from different locations (different campuses or from their individual homes)

“How would I go about conducting group sessions (determining appropriateness, selecting group materials)?”

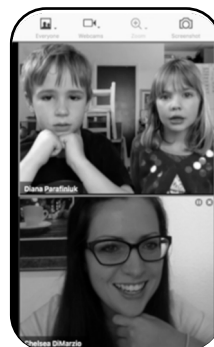


Photo courtesy of E-Therapy

Q9

Group Sessions

- Most often students are seen individually in telepractice, but you can absolutely see groups of students online
- It works best to see small groups (such as two students) for a session
- Flexibility between you and the client will dictate the appropriate group size

Q9

Tech Questions from Onsite SLPs

- What happens when students don't have a stable internet connection?
- What if students can only access the platform via iPhone/iPad/or other mobile device?
- What options do my students have if they don't use a device compatible with interactive features?
- Can I conduct sessions with an iPad and can I use an iPad to supplement my session (mirroring)?
- Do I need to purchase any special equipment to be successful?

Quick Tech Tips

- Make sure you share the right screen view
- How to check in with your participant regarding their tech, view, and usage
- Incorporating additional camera views (mirroring)



Photo courtesy of E-Therapy

Zoom Mirroring Video

What to do if your online session experiences technical difficulty:



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- Document
- Call
- Trouble shoot
- Reschedule
- Reassure

Q10

Checking the Tech Requirements

- Understanding your platform and online room connectivity
- Who to contact if you or student cannot reach you online
- Providing correct instructions to meet you in your therapy room and double checking everyone is in the right place

Double Check Your Tech Set Up

- **Computer**- laptop or desktop
- **Webcam**- utilize one that is built in to the computer or use an external camera
- **Headset**- some therapists use, some do not (depending on sound quality from computer)
- **Good internet connection**
- Same set up on the student's end
 - Students and teachers/parents are becoming increasingly comfortable with technology because it is a part of everyday life
 - Students are digital natives and are especially at ease with technology

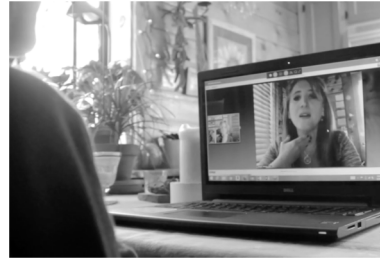


Photo courtesy of E-Therapy

Final Takeaways

- Teletherapy serves as a bridge and relationship-builder between students and clinician:
- Effective communication, consistent organization, and clear expectations set the stage for successful teletherapy sessions
- Secure and reliable technical platform and equipment is necessary for professional delivery of services

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