



# NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

Delta Region Community Health  
Systems Development (DRCHSD)  
Program Communication Strategies  
for Community Outreach and  
Education Webinar Series

## Part 7: Telehealth as a New Norm: Strategies to Build Understanding and Acceptance Internally and Externally

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# Delta Region Community Health System Development (DRCHSD) Program Supported By:



Delta Regional Authority

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**Mike Milligan, President**  
Legato Healthcare Marketing



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# Agenda

- The new opportunity for telehealth within rural health
- The benefits and barriers of telehealth
- Telehealth and diversity
- 6 steps for successful telehealth communication
- Telehealth communications tools for your employees, patients and community
- Thinking beyond COVID-19



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# Pre-Poll

**Q:** How confident are you in your understanding of how to effectively communicate and build awareness of telehealth services internally and externally? (select one)

1. **Extremely comfortable**
2. **Very comfortable**
3. **Comfortable**
4. **Somewhat comfortable**
5. **Not comfortable**



A photograph of a family in a living room. A woman with curly hair, wearing a yellow shirt and denim overalls, sits on a grey couch. She holds a tablet displaying a male doctor in a white lab coat. A young child lies on the couch, pointing at the tablet. A man in a striped shirt sits next to the child, resting his hand on the child's head. In the background, a teddy bear sits on the couch, and a bookshelf is visible. The scene is warmly lit, suggesting a home environment.

Utilizing telehealth for seeing patients  
in a primary and specialty care setting  
is relatively new for rural health

# TELEHEALTH Opportunity

- **With the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act**, along with state and federal emergency action—rural healthcare organizations have an easier path for telehealth implementation and reimbursement
- **The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services expanded Medicare coverage for telehealth visits.**
- **Reimbursements by private insurers vary by state**, with almost all states having some form of telehealth coverage



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# Question

**Q:** As a rural health organization, are you planning, or have you launched a telehealth program for primary or specialty care?

(Answer in chat box)



# TELEHEALTH Benefits

- **Keep patients at your facility** rather than having to transfer them out just to see another provider
- **Improve** access to specialists that are not available in your community
- **Reduce wait times**
- **Reduce practice overhead**
- **Improved healthcare outcomes**, particularly in the treatment of chronic care conditions
- **Reduced hospital readmissions**
- **Avoid the costs of having to travel** hours to see the specialist (time off from work, time away from family, etc.)



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# TELEHEALTH Barriers

## Provider resistance\*

- 22%** say it just doesn't fit their workflow
- 23%** say their patients aren't interested in telehealth
- 33%** express concern about privacy and data security
- 36%** say they're concerned about medical errors

\*Deloitte Study, Clinician Resistance to Telehealth, 2020



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# TELEHEALTH

## Within Diverse Cultures

**Telehealth is not the end-all answer for all audiences when it comes to patient visits**

- Telehealth requires patients to have access to technology, and strong Wi-Fi or broadband signal
- Telehealth may be more out-of-reach for individuals facing the social factors of health and who might be low-income



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# TELEHEALTH

## Within Diverse Cultures

- Telehealth usage by generation\*
  - **41% of patients ages 18 to 29 used telehealth**
  - **47% percent of those ages 30 to 49 did the same**
  - **Only 24% of adults over age 65 used telehealth**
- Language determined whether patients were going to use telehealth\*
- Black patients are four-times more likely to access the emergency department over telehealth than their white peers, highlighting a care access disparity\*

\*Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, 2020



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# PatientEngagementHit.com article

The screenshot shows the PatientEngagementHit.com website. The header includes the site logo, navigation links (Home, News, Features, Interviews, Podcasts, Research, White Papers & Webcasts, Events), and a search bar. The main content area features an article titled "Are There Health Disparities in COVID-19 Telehealth Access, Use?" with a sub-headline stating that Black patients are four-times more likely to access the emergency department over telehealth than their white peers. The article is attributed to Sara Heath and dated September 03, 2020. A sidebar on the right contains a "Newsletter Signup" form with checkboxes for various topics and a "sign up" button. The footer of the article mentions the source as the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association.

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**PATIENT CARE ACCESS NEWS**

## Are There Health Disparities in COVID-19 Telehealth Access, Use?

Black patients are four-times more likely to access the emergency department over telehealth than their white peers, highlighting a care access disparity.

Source: Getty Images

By Sara Heath

September 03, 2020 - Key health disparities have emerged in telehealth use and access during the initial surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, with older adults and Black and Hispanic patients being less likely to utilize the technology than their White and Asian peers, researchers reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*.

These findings confirm previous concerns about equitable healthcare access to virtual care technology, the researchers said.

"While telehealth has many benefits, especially during a global pandemic, it may create and/or exacerbate health disparities," explained the researchers, who hailed from the Department of Population Health Sciences and Policy in New York. "Research prior to the pandemic found that older Americans, rural communities, vulnerable populations, racial and ethnic minorities, and those with lower socioeconomic status (SES) status are all groups disadvantaged by the digital divide."

Using data from Mount Sinai, a New York City hospital in the epicenter of this year's initial virus outbreak, the researchers worked to identify sociodemographic differences in telehealth,...

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\*Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, 2020



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# Telehealth Communication 6 Steps for Success





# 01

## Establish Your **OBJECTIVES**

Your telehealth communication efforts are designed to:

- **Increase visibility and awareness** of your new telehealth services both internally and within our community
- **Drive utilization** of telehealth services both by patients and referring providers
- **Grow reputation** through media coverage, testimonials, and success stories



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# 02

## Define Your **TARGET AUDIENCES**

- **Staff** whose help we need to execute the telehealth program
- **Referring providers** who we want to participate in the service
- **Healthcare consumers/patients** who we want to use the service
- **Influencers** can impact a patient's decision to accept and use telehealth services



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# 02

## Define Your **TARGET AUDIENCES**

When selecting the appropriate communication channel, rural programs should **think about your target audience**

- Age
- Primary language
- Geographic location
- Patient or non-patient



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**Rural communities can engage a range  
of stakeholders to build awareness of  
telehealth programs**

Social service agencies  
Community-based organizations  
Faith-based institutions

# 03

## Build Awareness Through Effective **MESSAGING**

- **Message to the values** that consumers are seeking most
- **Calm patients' fears** by leading with safety, security and comfort
- **Support these emotional benefits with telehealth's functional benefits**, such as convenience, services offered and access, rather than overwhelming them with features first



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# 03

## Build Awareness Through Effective **MESSAGING**

- **Understanding your target audience** for telehealth will help rural programs develop the most appropriate messages
- **Consider the differences**
  - Some audiences may like the ability to receive specialty care close to home
  - Others may be interested in telehealth to manage chronic health conditions from home
  - While others may use it for urgent/primary care



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04

## Make It **VISUAL** A Quick Read

- Using too many words make telehealth look complicated

### HOW TO CHECK IN FOR YOUR VIDEO VISIT

- 1 Use a computer or device with camera/microphone

PC and Mac  
Chrome | Firefox | Safari

Android  
Chrome

iOS  
Safari
- 2 On the day and time of your appointment, click the link you received via text or e-mail to begin your visit.
- 3 Allow your browser to use your webcam and microphone
- 4 Type in your name and click check in

Welcome.

Please check in so your provider knows you are here.

✓ Secure

✓ HIPAA compliant

✓ No software to download

✓ No registration needed
- 5 Your care provider will start your visit

Call Tips

- Make sure you have a good internet connection
- Restart your device before the visit
- Test your camera and mic from the waiting room
- Need help? Please call your clinic.



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05

## HUMANIZE IT

Remember, it's not as much about the technology as it is about the people giving and receiving care

- **3 out of 5** rural consumers said they **WOULD NOT** try telemedicine\*
- **Demonstrate that telehealth can be personal** by featuring physician faces they know and trust within your communications

\*Gartner Study, January 2019




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05


## HUMANIZE IT

TRUSTED CARE IS  
**ALWAYS HERE**

 Virtual Visits for Primary Care



Audubon County Memorial Hospital & Clinics is now offering telehealth appointments for primary care. It's a virtual video or audio visit that is so easy to use you don't even need to download an app. Simply use a smart phone, tablet or computer to meet with your healthcare provider in the comfort of your own home. Trusted care, when you need it most.

 To learn more, visit  
[acmhosp.org/telehealth](http://acmhosp.org/telehealth)

To make a telehealth appointment, call **712-563-4611**.  
Appointments are available during regular clinic hours.

\*Gartner Study, January 2019



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06

## Remove **BARRIERS**

### Make it easy for patients to find, understand and especially use your telehealth services

- Access through your website
  - Support with digital efforts
  - Positive word-of-mouth
  - Make it newsworthy
- Gain a competitive edge as consumers may have access to alternative telehealth options



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# Telehealth Communications Tools

Results

Down

# Question

**Q:** If your organization has launched a telehealth program what communication tools have you use to build awareness and usage?

(Answer in chat box)



# INTERNAL Communication and Training

- Awareness of telehealth services through presentations to providers and employees
- Phone scripting
- Video etiquette training tips for telehealth providers



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# VIDEO Etiquette

- ✓ Make sure the webcam is at eye level
- ✓ Look at the camera
- ✓ Chose an appropriate space (private, professional, quite)
- ✓ Test your background
- ✓ Be on time
- ✓ Dress the same way you would for an office appointment
- ✓ Be prepared for each patient visit
- ✓ Let the patient know if you are intentionally looking away from the screen
- ✓ Leave a few seconds between sentences to allow for internet lag times
- ✓ Be clear with post-visit instructions
- ✓ Ask if they were satisfied with their telehealth visit experience



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# PATIENT Communication

- Telehealth “How to check-in” downloadable flyer
- Patient letter
- Patient brochure
- Direct mail
- Patient stories – newsletter or publications

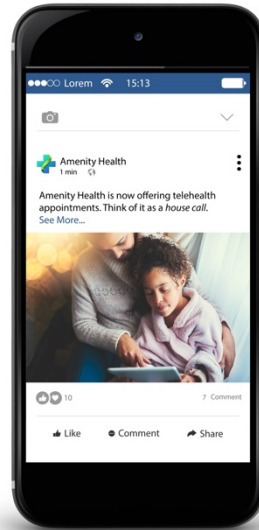


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# EXTERNAL Communication

- Digital channels
  - Social media
  - Pay-per-click
- Local media including newspaper and radio
- Update website content
- Media relations



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# Thinking beyond COVID-19



# THINKING beyond COVID-19

## The future of telehealth beyond COVID-19

- Every step you take to build awareness and implement your telehealth program now is a step toward a future in which telehealth plays a larger role in the care you provide your patients
- As continue consumers experience the convenience of telehealth, access to care will permanently change in the minds of your patients after the pandemic



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# Post-Poll

**Q:** How confident are you in your understanding of how to effectively communicate and build awareness of telehealth services internally and externally? (select one)

1. **Extremely comfortable**
2. **Very comfortable**
3. **Comfortable**
4. **Somewhat comfortable**
5. **Not comfortable**

## Summary

- The CARES Act provided rural healthcare organizations an easier path for telehealth implementation and reimbursement
- Patients have convenient access to primary and specialty care
- Take into consideration the challenges you may face from providers and a diverse patient audience
- 6 steps to effective telehealth communications
- Learned what communication and training tools you should consider when communicating with providers, staff, patients and your community
- The future of telehealth beyond COVID-19



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# DRCHSD Communication Strategies for Community Outreach and Education Webinar Series

**See you for Webinar #8!**

**What is Your 2021 Story? The Art of Storytelling**

Thursday, December 17, 11:00-12:00 CT

Speaker: Brian Lani



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# Thank You!

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