

Wyoming Telehealth Network

March 2024 Provider Spotlight

1. When did you first hear about telehealth? How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?

Being in the medical field, I had heard about telehealth platforms such as Zoom but it wasn't a part of my practice until the pandemic began. I am always excited to hear of creative ways to reach Wyoming's most vulnerable populations to ensure they have access to healthcare. I have been thankful that telehealth has been an option for myself and my team.

2. When did you begin offering telehealth services? What prompted the need to offer these services?

At Public Health Nursing, we began using the Zoom platform for our statewide, all-staff meetings. When the pandemic hit we found that our home visiting program needed a way to continue to connect with pregnant individuals and families with young children since we could no longer go into their homes. Telehealth was a great alternative to in-home visits.

3. What motivates you to continue offering telehealth services?

We like the flexibility we can offer families and our staff. For example, if the weather is bad, making travel difficult, being able to provide a telehealth visit instead of canceling keeps services going forward.

4. What is your proudest accomplishment with telehealth?

Through the use of telehealth for Wyoming Hand in Hand Home Visitation program, we were able to stay connected to pregnant individuals and families with small children while the whole world was stuck at home. We were able to continue to provide valuable resources and support throughout the pandemic even when we couldn't serve them in-person.

5. What advice would you give patients wanting to try telehealth?

Making the decision to try telehealth is just another way patients can take charge of their own healthcare. Weigh the pros and cons of telehealth and decide if it's an option for you but also be cognizant of when an in-person visit should occur.

6. What advice would you give providers wanting to start offering telehealth?

Find ways to creatively partner with established community partners. For example, does the local library have a room that could be used for telehealth and easily accessed by the community? It is also important to survey patients and involved staff with a short questionnaire on what is working well or not and then make changes accordingly. Be willing to shift and mold to fit the needs of each specific community.

7. What was the biggest barrier in providing telehealth services? Have you overcome it?

For Public Health Nursing, the biggest barrier was ensuring that families had the knowledge and equipment in their home to access their telehealth visit. There were initial concerns about HIPAA compliance, families having enough data if using a cell phone and if the family had access to high-speed internet. For the most part, this is self-resolved as telehealth has

become more commonplace.

8. How do you think implementing telehealth now will affect how things will be done at your organization after the pandemic is over?

Now that the pandemic is officially over, we are encouraging our nurses to use telehealth as another tool to reach families. The more flexibility and options we can provide families, the more families will stay engaged in our program.

9. Is there anything you learned the hard way in telehealth implementation?

Yes! We learned that not all components of our program are appropriate for distribution over telehealth. For example, it could be dangerous to provide a screening to a client on intimate partner violence since we can't be sure of who is present in the room/home with them. We have had to learn which screenings, assessments and components are appropriate for the telehealth space and omit the ones that aren't.

10. Do you have any telehealth hacks or tricks?

- Using the built-in tools/functions such as the white board, polls, breakout rooms, or screen sharing that most telehealth platforms have to offer is a great way to make a telehealth visit engaging for the client/patient.
- Keep telehealth visits slightly shorter than an in-person visit would be. People are easily distracted and bored by long telehealth visits.
- Prepare your clients/staff on the expectations of a telehealth visit prior to the visit. We are big on explaining why it's important to have your camera on during a meeting or visit and find that people comply when the expectation is laid out prior.
- Don't expect that telehealth will work for all families. My grandparents never had internet and can barely use a cell phone.