

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

MAKING TELEHEALTH WORK FOR YOUR CHILD

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
JUNE 2020 MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT

Like social distancing, telehealth has become a familiar word during COVID-19. Telehealth uses technology as an alternative to in-person face-to-face contact. Many office-based and in-home services are being provided via telehealth. For mental health this could be a therapy session, psychological or psychiatric evaluation or a meeting to update a service plan. Telehealth can occur with individuals, families, or groups. Telehealth may continue as an option as providers begin the process of reopening. Since telehealth may continue for a time, here are some ways to think about telehealth in order to maximize the experience.

There are both some positives and some challenges to using telehealth with children.

Positives include a flexible schedule without the hassle of traveling, parking or need for childcare; the comfort of being in your own home, and your ability to provide direct support during the therapy session or evaluation.

Challenges include lack of privacy at home with others there; maintaining attention to the telehealth session, misunderstanding what is being stated or understood, and technology issues.

There are things you can do to make sure that your child gets the most out of these remote sessions.

Making the Most of Telehealth Sessions

- **Let your child know what to expect** – Talk with your child to prepare them for what will happen and the purpose.
- **Set clear boundaries** – Participate when you can and there is a purpose, but allow your child their own session with the therapist/staff. Identify an area where the session can occur without interruptions or distractions. Understand and communicate time frames.
- **Do a trial run** – If you are beginning services, download any required software and test the equipment ahead of time, ensuring you have a strong internet connection in the location and that the device you are using is charged. Find out how you will receive the link from your provider. Be sure you know how to work the camera and volume on the device.
- **Know the ground rules** - Be part of the initial conversation with the provider about how things will go and what they expect from you and your child. Be sure to write down any questions you have as well so that they get answered.
- **Stay focused** – Don't do anything you wouldn't do in an office setting. For example, don't allow your child to eat a meal or be on their phone. Try to remove any distractions. Setting a timer can help a younger child visualize the length of the session.
- **Provide Support** – Even if your child typically meets by themselves with the therapist, they may need a hand at times with telehealth. Make sure you check in with the therapist to see if there are any assignments they need to do between sessions and then help them decide how to complete them. Check in with your child and provider to see how the sessions are going. Remember you can adapt if necessary, by being present for part of the session or switching to shorter sessions if that is what is best for your child.

Excerpted from: [https://childmind.org/article/telehealth-for-kids\](https://childmind.org/article/telehealth-for-kids/)