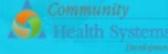


## RURAL HEALTH LINK: THE TELEHEALTH QUARTERLY DIGEST



This quarterly communication, for Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP) grantees, is brought to you by the technical assistance team of the **Georgia Health Policy Center** and **CSI Solutions**.

### GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS



#### **Featured Grantee** North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program

##### **Greenville, North Carolina**

The Georgia Health Policy Center recently spoke to Sy Saeed, M.D., director of NC-STeP, and Kalyan Muppavarapu, M.D., NC-STeP's medical director, about their participation in the Telehealth Network Grant Program.

[Learn More](#)



#### **Featured Grantee -** Garnet Health

##### **Middletown, New York**

The Georgia Health Policy Center recently spoke to key staff at Garnet Health, which runs the SMHART program, including Jonathan Schiller, CEO Garnet Health Medical Center - Catskills; program directors Ulrick Vieux, D.O. and Halana Finnie, Ph.D.; and Royce Pilkington, program coordinator.

[Learn More](#)

### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC UPDATES



#### **Quarterly Technical Assistance (TA) Webinar: Use of Telepsychiatry to Increase Access and Improve Care for Emergency Department Patients**

**Tuesday, March 9, 2:00 - 3:00 PM EST**

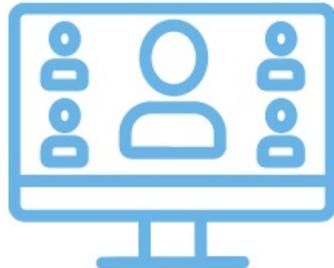
**Join us on Tuesday, March 9 from 2:00 - 3:00 PM EST for our next webinar for Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP) grantees.** In the Emergency Department (ED), it is important to provide patients experiencing a behavioral health crisis with specialized care as quickly as possible. For such patients, long lengths of stay in non-optimal settings can impact the health and safety of patients, families, and staff. A multidisciplinary Emergency Telepsychiatry Program can provide 24/7 access to high-quality behavioral health assessment, stabilization, and admission/referral to hospital or community environments for ongoing treatment. This session will:

- Discuss common challenges of Emergency Telepsychiatry program design and implementation, and ways that these may be addressed
- Describe the role played by Emergency Medicine, Community Behavioral Health

- Organizations, and Inpatient Psychiatry in maximizing the impact of Emergency Telepsychiatry programs
- Share insights and lessons learned relevant to developing a successful and sustainable tele-behavioral health initiative in the ED setting

**Note:** Advance registration is required. Once registered you will receive a confirmation email with all details for accessing the webinar.

[Register](#)



### Communities of Practice Calls

Thank you for your participation in the February Community of Practice calls! These peer group calls are driven by your interests and needs as you implement your Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP) grant initiatives. They are a forum to pose questions, asks, and offers with TNGP peers. If there are ever any specific topics or issues you would like to explore on a future call, please reach out to your dedicated TA provider or peer group facilitator. The next round of Community of Practice calls will take place in mid-May.

As a reminder, there is an online TNGP Peer Group Community on [www.healthcarecommunities.org](http://www.healthcarecommunities.org). This is an online space were TNGP grantees can connect and share resources with one another. If you have further questions about accessing or using the portal, please reach out to your TA provider.



### Health Care Landscape Analysis Report

In March, the TNGP TA team is preparing to release the first of two reports this year that will look at the rural health care environment and explore current policies, factors, trends, innovations, and resources relevant to your telehealth initiatives. The first report will focus on an examination of the past, present, and future of telehealth policy during the COVID pandemic. It will be accompanied by a recorded webinar that will provide additional context and an overview of the report.

## ARTICLES

### [Telemedicine Care Disparities Draw Concern for Health Equity](#)

A study of 148,402 patients found that telemedicine visits were less likely among patients who were older, did not speak English as a primary language, were Asian, and had Medicaid. Additionally, lower use of video for telemedicine visits was more common among patients who were older age, female, African American, Latino, and had a median household income of \$50,000. The authors provide recommendations for telemedicine to promote health equity. Click [here](#) to access the study.

### [“What Are You Learning?”: COVID-19 as a Lens into the Past, Present and Future of Telemedicine](#)

The global COVID-19 pandemic is serving as a natural experiment putting telemedicine to the test on an unprecedented scale, sparking conversations about the implications of telehealth across diverse specialties and international boundaries. Taking their surgery practice as an example, the authors assessed their telehealth growing pains through weekly surveys that asked the simple questions: “What are you learning? What is working? What is not?” At least six key lessons emerged through this exercise. Click [here](#) to access the article.

### [Evaluating Telehealth Adoption and Related Barriers Among Hospitals Located in Rural and Urban Areas](#)

Using the 2018 American Hospital Association Annual Survey and IT

Supplement Survey, researchers assessed telehealth adoption among hospitals located in rural and urban areas and identified barriers to enhanced telehealth capabilities in the areas of patient engagement and health information exchange capacity. The research showed substantial differences in telehealth adoption among hospitals in rural, micropolitan, and metropolitan areas, with adoption rates increasing with urbanicity. Rural hospitals were least likely to have telehealth systems with patient engagement capabilities. They were also the least likely to report that clinical information was available electronically from outside providers. Click [here](#) to access the article.

### [Similarities and Differences Between Rural and Urban Telemedicine Utilization](#)

Telemedicine has traditionally been used in rural areas, but the recent development of mHealth solutions has led to a growth in urban telemedicine services. This study examined whether urban and rural patients at a large academic medical center use telemedicine to access different health care specialties at different rates by looking at all telemedicine visits from 2008 to 2017. There were significant differences between rural and urban use of telemedicine, both in terms of specialties and demographics. Click [here](#) to access the article.

## RESOURCES, NEW AND OTHER UPDATES

### [American Medical Association Telehealth Quick Guide](#)

The American Medical Association created a telehealth quick guide that provides readers with insight and guidance to telehealth practice implementation, policy, coding, and payment. The guide also provides readers with other helpful resources from various organizations, including the American College of Physicians, the American Telehealth Association, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Click [here](#) to access the quick guide.

### [American Psychiatric Association Telepsychiatry Toolkit](#)

The American Psychiatric Association Work Group on Telepsychiatry developed a toolkit that covers the following telepsychiatry topics:

- History and background
- Training
- Legal and reimbursement issues
- Technical considerations
- Practice and clinical issues

Click [here](#) to access the toolkit.

### [Fact Sheet: Telehealth Provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act \(HR 133\) 2021](#)

The Center for Connected Health Policy drafted a fact sheet that summarizes the Consolidated Appropriations Act (2021) and highlights telehealth-related provisions around Medicare and broadband. Telehealth-related provisions on the No Surprise Act and virtual visits in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visit Program are also highlighted. Click [here](#) to access the fact sheet.

### [Podcast: Telemedicine During the Pandemic](#)

Researchers from the Georgia Health Policy Center, including the Community Health Systems Development Team's Amanda Phillips Martinez, were featured on the Andrew Young School podcast Telehealth During the Pandemic. The podcast examines policy changes that support the use of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, developing plans for sustainability of providers' telehealth programs, and how both behavioral health and rural health providers are creating innovative solutions to meet the unique needs of specific populations. Click [here](#) to listen to the podcast.

### [Telehealth: A Path to Virtual Integrated Care](#)

The report, drafted by the American Hospital Association Center for Health Innovation, examines telehealth's role in the digital transformation; delivery platforms and how they fit into integrated care; and how hospitals and health systems can build capacity to expand access, improve outcomes, and reduce costs. The report also provides pertinent information on:

- The Hospital Telehealth Maturity Model
- Scaling and Optimizing Telehealth Programs
- Case studies on various health systems and facilities

Click [here](#) to access the full report.

### [Toolkit for Building and Growing a Sustainable Telehealth Program in Your Practice](#)

In partnership with Manatt Health, The American Academy of Family Physicians has developed a toolkit that provides readers with guidance to building and growing a sustainable telehealth program in family medicine practices. The toolkit includes information on:

- Understanding telehealth services and payments
- Establishing roles and responsibilities
- Customizing a "Telehealth Appropriateness" approach
- Designing your patients "Digital Journey"
- Redesigning your workflow

Click [here](#) to access the toolkit.

### [\*\*HRSA Evidence-Based Telehealth Grant Program - Applications due April 2\*\*](#)

The Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy will be making up to 14 new awards through the Evidence-Based Telehealth Network Grant Program. Each awardee will receive up to \$350,000 annually. The goals of this program are to demonstrate how health care systems can increase access to health care services utilizing direct-to-consumer telehealth technologies and to conduct evaluations of those efforts to establish an evidence base for assessing the effectiveness of direct-to-consumer telehealth care for patients, providers, and payers. Eligible applicants are domestic public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities with demonstrated experience utilizing telehealth technologies to serve rural, underserved populations. Click [here](#) for more information.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### [\*\*Webinar: Arizona Telemedicine Program - Telemedicine Applications\*\*](#)

March 15, 2021 from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. MST

Please join the University of Arizona as they host a conference that offers a detailed approach to telemedicine programs and provides an in-depth look at the clinical applications of telehealth programs. The conference is an excellent opportunity for individuals and organizations that are new to telehealth and those seeking to expand their services. Click [here](#) for more information.

### [\*\*2021 Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center Telehealth Summit\*\*](#)

March 28-30, 2021

Please join the Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center as they host a telehealth summit centered on the current disruptive technologies and innovations shaping the future of health care. This year the summit is also offering a tele-behavioral health track. There is an opportunity for individuals to attend the summit in-person or virtually. Click [here](#) for more information.

### [\*\*Save the Date - 2021 The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology Annual Meeting\*\*](#)

March 29-30, 2021

Please continue to check [here](#) for more information and updates.

### [\*\*Save the Date - Annual Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center Telehealth Conference- VIRTUAL\*\*](#)

April 21-23, 2021

Please continue to check [here](#) for more information and updates.

### [\*\*American Telemedicine Association 2021 Annual Conference and Expo - VIRTUAL\*\*](#)

June 1-29, 2021

Please join the American Telemedicine Association (ATA), as they host their annual Telehealth Conference and Expo. This year the conference will be centered on enabling flexible, inclusive, and contemporary care delivery. Attendees will also have the opportunity to engage with ATA and other stakeholders around lessons learned, challenges, strategies to design the appropriate technology, and best practices to improve patient and provider experiences and clinical outcomes. Click [here](#) for more information.

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