



Office for the Advancement of Telehealth
Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP)
Monthly e-Blast - April 2021

Program-Specific Updates

Quarterly Technical Assistance (TA) Webinar: Recording and Slides Available!

The slides and recording from the March 9 Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP) webinar, **Use of Telepsychiatry to Increase Access and Improve Care for Emergency Department Patients**, are posted to the [grantee website](#).

You may find the materials directly on the [TNGP page](#). Feel free to share with any key staff or partners that were not able to attend.

Technical Assistance Action Plan Updates

As part of ongoing assessment of grantee needs and TA support, TA providers have been reviewing the Technical Assistance Action Plans (TAAPs) developed at the beginning of your grant and are dedicating time on March or April monthly calls to review the TAAP. This is an opportunity to check-in to see if any additional updates or revisions might be indicated given where your TNGP program is now roughly six months into implementation.

TNGP Communities of Practice Calls

The next round of calls is scheduled to take place in mid-May 2021. These groups continue to meet quarterly and are driven by the interests and needs of participants in each group. If you are interested in joining a group but not yet involved with one, please reach out to your TA Provider. Be on the lookout in the coming weeks for additional information and dates.

Resources, News, and Other Updates

[Congress Targets Telehealth Coverage for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment](#)

This article highlights several bills proposed to expand telehealth coverage for mental health and substance use services. The proposed bills include:

- S 660, introduced by Senators Tina Smith (D-MN) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), would require private health plans to cover mental health and substance use disorder services for both in-person and telehealth visits.
- The Telehealth Response for E-prescribing Addiction Therapy Services Act would eliminate the in-person exam requirement and allow care providers to prescribe certain controlled substances via telehealth in medication-assisted treatment programs. The act would also expand Medicare coverage for mHealth services to include audio-only phone calls. The act has been introduced in both the Senate and the House.
- Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act (S 445), introduced by Senators Tina Smith (D-MN) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH), would eliminate the “X wavier” requirement for prescribing certain drugs including buprenorphine in medication-assisted therapy treatment. The bill was reintroduced in both the Senate and the House.

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

Podcast: Yes, COVID-19 Changed Telemedicine Use – But It’s Complicated

On this episode of A Health Podyssey, host Alan Weil interviews Dr. Michael Barnett, from the T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Dr. Sadiq Patel, from Harvard Medical School, on their recently published telemedicine research. Their research focused on telemedicine use for outpatient care from roughly 17 million commercially insured and Medicare Advantage enrollees, with a focus on disadvantaged populations. They found that although telemedicine use increased exponentially (23-fold), the total volume of visits decreased by a third. Other findings include low use of telemedicine among commercially insured enrollees in counties with higher poverty rates and those who lived in more rural areas. Telemedicine use also varied among provider specialties. Dermatologists, ophthalmologists, and physical therapists experienced a significant decline in visits and very low telemedicine utilization rates.

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

Safer at Home: Using Remote Patient Monitoring for Patient Care

The Health Information Technology, Evaluation, and Quality Center, has created a resource that guides readers on planning, implementing, and financially sustaining a remote patient monitoring program. Guidance is provided on:

- Planning, including a project management plan and vendor/device selection
- Implementation, including aligning with organizational initiatives, readying staff and patients for remote patient monitoring rollout, and optimizing processes and procedures on an ongoing basis to achieve desired outcomes
- Financial sustainability, including a clinical improvement financial tool

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

Video: 2021 Telehealth Policy Updates

This video, moderated by Mei Wa Kwong, executive director of the Center for Connected Health Policy, provides a high-level overview of the federal (Medicare) and state (Medicaid) telehealth policy changes implemented during COVID-19. Kwong shares the differences between Medicare’s policies around telehealth and communications technology-based services such as remote patient monitoring. Kwong also breaks down the four elements (service, location, provider, and modality) that comprise reimbursement policies and discusses reimbursement requirements for private payers. Additionally, the video highlights permanent federal policy changes, reviews the calendar year 2021 Physician Fee Schedule, highlights the telehealth provisions under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, lists 2021 legislative trends, and more.

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

Upcoming Events



[Questions about Telehealth Technology or Vendors](#)

April 6, 2021 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

Join Mike Patterson from the Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center as he answers questions concerning telehealth technology and vendors.

[Register](#)



[Tackling Inequities in Digital Care](#)

April 12, 2021 from 2:00-3:30 p.m.ET

Join the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials as they host a webinar that shares innovative interventions that will improve digital equity and potentially lower health disparities. Presenters include:

- Dr. Alexis Travis, Senior Deputy Director, Aging and Adult Services;
- Lawrence Kosick, GetSetUp Co-Founder
- Craig Settles, Industry Analyst, Expert Broadband Business Strategist,
- Rose Jones, Director, Division of Elderly Affairs

[Register](#)



[2021 NTCA Legislative & Policy Conference](#)

April 12-13, 2021

The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association- Rural Broadband Association will host their annual Legislative and Policy Conference. The conference will feature regulatory experts and discuss policies that support rural broadband network development efforts and strategies to move the needs of rural America to the top of policymakers' agendas.

[Register](#)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Community Health Centers

[National FQHC Telehealth Training and Technical Assistance Partners Roundtable](#)

May 28, 2021, from 1:00-3:00 P.M. ET

The National Association of Community Health Centers and the National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Center will host the National Federally Qualified Health Center Telehealth Technical Assistance Partners Roundtable. The event aims to increase cooperation and enhance opportunities for coordination among the Health

Resources and Services Administration-funded Telehealth
Technical Assistance providers and other stakeholders.

[Register](#)



*This digest is brought to you by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and the
TNGP Technical Assistance Team.*