GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTING
A TELEHEALTH PROGRAM

What public health problem are you attempting to address and how can telehealth scale up or maintain relevant programs to address this challenge?

To answer these questions, follow the steps to **1. Assess, 2. Define, 3. Plan,** and **4. Implement** your telehealth program.

1. ASSESS

NEEDS

- Gather information from state or community needs assessments or other sources.
  - ► Collect data – quantify needs to create measurable objectives.
  - ► Prioritize needs to focus restricted resources where they will be most effective.

- Analyze the scope of the population for whom you are trying to provide services for, such as what health insurance plan or type of insurance will cover the services and what specific laws or regulations may impact the issue you are addressing? For example, some states have specific privacy laws that relate to mental health.

- Consider whether there is support in the community for telehealth, including the state health agency, lawmakers, and community members.

PARTICIPANTS

- Identify and assemble a team of stakeholders.
  - ► Engage clinical, technological, administrative, and legal staff in the process from the beginning to build sustainability and support.
  - ► Identify a telehealth champion or specialized champions to spearhead different elements of the development.

- Consider whether there is a willingness to collaborate from local stakeholders to participate from the client population. Their support can determine whether the program succeeds.

CONTEXT

- Identify available resources such as funding, staff, and facilities.
  - ► Conduct a preliminary technology assessment to evaluate existing resources and availability to participants to determine if updates or access is needed in the facility before adding telehealth technologies.

- Location: Consider the security and privacy of identified areas.

- Legal considerations.
  - ► Understand telehealth standards, guidelines, and federal and state policies, including both licensure and reimbursement.

- Visit communities in-person to evaluate site readiness, building relationships with community stakeholders along the way.

2. DEFINE

DEVELOP A DELIVERY MODEL

✓ Research and analyze available telehealth technologies and choose the type of technology most appropriate to meet the identified needs.

WHAT:

Healthcare services that will be provided remotely.

WHO:

Which healthcare providers (primary care, specialty care, or other) will be involved and what type of participant would best fit this delivery model (keep in mind potential language barriers, physical limitations, or mental limitations such as memory loss).

HOW:

Mode of telehealth delivery (live video conferencing; store-and-forward; remote patient monitoring; mHealth).

WHERE:

Location where services will be provided (e.g., specific care facilities, clients' homes, schools.).

DEVELOP A BUSINESS CASE

✓ Look at current public telehealth programs as examples.

✓ Reach out to other state government agencies to combine resources.

✓ Partnerships can be the key to implementing a successful public health program – building shared ownership of community health can generate diverse resources to be utilized for improving the program, whether that be funding, advocacy efforts, community engagement, or other resources.

ELEMENTS IN A DELIVERY MODEL

- Potential impact on the community and stakeholders.

- Projected costs: potential equipment, facilities, staff, and other items needed.
  - ▸ **Short-and long-term funding sources:** View grants only as short-term seed funding (often used for infrastructure and initial costs) and search for additional ways to fund the ongoing program. **For example, look to reimbursement:** *Would Medicaid or private payers reimburse for the service?*
  - ▸ Seek opportunities to contract with local and state departments, health insurance plans, and additional partners to further sustainability of the program.

- Plan to incorporate health information technology such as electronic medical records.

- Identify alignment of delivery model with the state health agency priorities and programs.

3. PLAN

Building on a business plan, create a detailed implementation plan.
Consider the following components as you develop the implementation plan.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- Initial and long-term funding specifics (e.g., explicit grants or reimbursement policies).
- Eligibility requirements for program participation (e.g., client screening for health status, location, or access to technology).
- Guidelines on how to use the technology to address the health condition.
- List of tasks required to implement and integrate the program within current operations: staffing, clinical services, site coordination, room preparation, training, marketing, coding and billing, etc.
  - ▶ Leverage existing program infrastructure and workforce development when possible.
- Detailed timelines, deliverables (e.g. protocols and procedures), and milestones.
- Goals should be measurable.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

- Technology specifications and chosen vendor or platform.
- Service agreements and business associate agreements which are signed with vendors who have access to protected health information.
- List of tasks required to implement and maintain technology: IT department staffing, training, or technology installation.
  - ▶ Note whether there are differences in capability and internet connectivity if multiple sites are involved.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- Uniform performance monitoring indicators, data collection mechanisms, and a timeline or monitoring.
- Quality improvement process to utilize when performance monitoring indicators are not met.

4. IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR

NOTE: Test equipment before advertising and implementing your program. If possible, test and pilot the program.

1. Implement all tasks listed in the plans.
2. Complete deliverables including contracts and agreement policies, protocols, and procedures.
   - Keep protocols and procedures consistent across the program to ensure quality and coordination.
3. Collect data and implement quality improvements if needed.
4. Report progress consistently: keep stakeholders engaged by keeping them apprised of progress, successes, and solicitation of feedback.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

ASTHO Telehealth Resources • Center for Connected Health Policy
National Telehealth Technology Assessment Resource Center • Regional Telehealth Resource Centers

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