



# Telehealth Policy

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Spark Therapy Services aims to provide accessible services to all clients. Telehealth services allows continuity of services in the case of a pandemic and social distancing restrictions, as an alternative to face-to-face services and for families in regional and remote communities.

Our mission at The Spark is to provide meaningful, family centred and sustainable support to families.

## 2. PURPOSE

To provide a description of the telehealth program and services available to The Spark Therapy Services clients and families. This policy reviews the telehealth definition, the delivery system of the services, reimbursement structure, and service requirements.

### DEFINITION:

- Telehealth is a term that refers to the delivery of health care services and support via any telecommunication technology. A telehealth service can consist of videoconferencing, phone calls, emails and text or other direct messages.
- Telehealth can be used for many situations including assessment, direct therapy, parent coaching and support, teacher education and support, monitoring of home programs, equipment and resource trials and prescription, and problem solving.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director and staff are responsible for following this policy and procedure.

## 2. PROCEDURE

### A) PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All federal and state laws regarding the confidentiality of health care information and client and their families' rights to his or her health information apply to telehealth services.

Telehealth consultations should be private and confidential, and therapists should have processes in place to facilitate this as per standard face-to-face consultations. Client and family privacy and confidentiality should be maintained at all times. We will provide this by:

- Providing a private and quiet environment for our OTs to meet with you when you have your online meeting.
- Telehealth platforms used include: Zoom, Microsoft Teams or CoviU.

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- As a guest user, you do not need to sign up in order to use these platforms.
- We will send you an invitation via email to join a telehealth session.
- Your health records and information is not stored or shared with the telehealth platforms.
- Zoom Security settings will be used to maximise security. Recommended Zoom Security settings are outlined in the Zoom Security Settings Document saved in The Spark One Drive / Staff and HR forms / Telehealth folder.
- Microsoft Teams uses point-to-point audio, video, and application sharing streams which are encrypted and integrity checked using Secure Real-Time Transport Protocol (SRTP).

## **B) CONSENT**

Informed consent to participate in telehealth services is provided by participants and their families prior to engaging in telehealth services. Clients need to be informed about the proposed use of telehealth and the potential risks and benefits.

No dissemination of any images or information to other entities without further written consent.

In cases where a recording is to be used for education or assessment purposes, the client should be informed of this and verbal consent to the recording of the consultation, and how the recording is to be used, should be given at the start of the telehealth consultation and recorded.

## **C) SERVICE**

Telehealth should be conducted in accordance with existing best practice clinical standards and models of care for face-to-face consultations. A telehealth consultation of high quality is one in which:

- ➔ Ongoing goals and progress are reviewed
- ➔ Activities targeting goals are implemented
- ➔ Observations and assessment noted
- ➔ Recommendations and reviews are clearly communicated as per current best practice models of care.

The decision to use telehealth incorporates the following factors:

- **Clinical:** continuity of care, shared care, and the best model of care for families

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- **Practical:** availability of appropriate technology and client-end support. The quality of the technology at the remote site will play a significant role in the information gained during the clinical consultation.

Before conducting a telehealth consultation, therapists should ensure clients understand how the consultation will proceed. This may include:

- Providing plain language information about telehealth
- Informing clients of the new NDIS regulations around telehealth
- Indicating the length of the telehealth consultation.
- Therapists will need to ensure that the caregiver has been given adequate information regarding the telehealth consultation in advance.
- A plan for the session will be provided to the appointment including any resources or equipment that will be incorporated into the session.

***Telehealth services can include:***

- Parent capacity building sessions – coaching, problem solving and parent education.
- Formation and review of goals and problem-solving practical strategies to develop skills.
- Home program development and review
- Coaching parent and child through pre-planned activities.
- Educator consultation
- Resource development and at-home activities
- Fine and gross motor skill assessment and intervention
- Handwriting assessment and intervention
- Strategies to support -self-regulation e.g. breath work and heavy work activities
- Creative mindfulness
- Parent-child coaching to develop the child’s play and social interaction skills.
- Social skills intervention and training.
- Psycho-education – supporting your child to learn about their body and brain to develop their self-awareness.

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#### **D) REQUIRED EQUIPMENT**

The basic requirement of telehealth is the transfer of audio and visual data in real time between the therapist and family.

Therapists and families will need to ensure equipment is reliable and works well over the locally available network and bandwidth. The equipment needs to be of high enough quality to facilitate good communication between all participants and accurate transfer of therapeutic information.

#### **E) DOCUMENTATION**

Documentation as per face-to-face guidelines – uploaded into Halaxy. The physical location of the client as well as the physical location of the therapist must be documented as well as everyone involved in the clinical encounter, including those who may be off camera.

#### **F) CLIENT SAFETY**

- During telehealth appointments, your child must be supervised by yourself or another adult.
- Your child's safety is your responsibility during the telehealth appointment.
- Providing a safe environment to conduct the telehealth session is your responsibility.
- If you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of your child, please discuss these with your OT.

#### **BENEFITS**

- Opportunity for regular therapeutic intervention during periods of self-isolation and social distancing.
- No travel costs
- Activities performed in your family's natural environment with your own resources
- Empowerment through therapist coaching
- Continuity of service and focus on your child's development and goals due to regular intervention rather than suspending therapy
- Education and upskilling of child's support network
- Siblings can attend
- Screen interaction can be motivating for some children

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## CHALLENGES

- Depending on the family and caregiver’s situation – they may have difficulty engaging in telehealth due to increased stress, decreased time or other lifestyle factors
- Limited resources to participate
- Limited space to participate
- Technology issues
- Building rapport and child engagement may be a challenge

## 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on this procedure, contact Tina Bruce Director The Spark Therapy Services

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