

Online Manual for the Telepractice Paraprofessional



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1. Introduction

Hello, this online manual was created to aide in the training of school-based telepractice paraprofessionals. It contains basic information on telepractice, links to ASHA documents, and telepractice project tips from speech-language pathologists (SLPs), school administrators and a paraprofessional with school-based telepractice program experience. The idea for this manual came about as a masters special project after noticing the impact support personnel involved in telepractice have on the overall success of a program. As a first year graduate student, I had the pleasure of working with wonderful supervisors/clinicians and an amazing paraprofessional whose presence helped make telepractice effective and fun. I'd like to thank Ms. Colette Edwards, my special project supervisor, for helping me make this idea a reality. I would also like to thank everyone who participated in the telepractice survey entitled *School-based Telepractice Questions for Paraprofessionals, SLPs, and School Administrators* distributed through the American Speech-Hearing-Language Association's (ASHA) Special Interest Group 18 and qualtrics.com. I've incorporated your thoughts into this manual – you give it breath.

Note: It's important for all school-based telepractice personnel to be aware of and understand their role in a telepractice project. Shared enthusiasm and creativity, combined with a desire to collaborate, take action and problem-solve, contribute to the satisfaction of providing students therapeutic services through telepractice. Hopefully, this manual may also serve to promote:

- An increase in school administrators' knowledge of telepractice
- Refinement of the recruitment and hiring process for telepractice paraprofessionals
- Enhancement of supervision and training of the school-based telepractice paraprofessional

To the paraprofessional:

Congratulations on becoming your school-site's telepractice paraprofessional! You are now a part of a growing movement – telepractice projects across the globe give individuals in remote, rural, and urban areas access to therapy services. The telepractice SLP will be able to work with the students at your school because of you. Thank you!

Depending on where you live, you may or may not have had training as a paraprofessional or speech therapy assistant. That's ok. This manual is designed to provide you with basic information about the role of the paraprofessional in telepractice and the unique skills you'll need to assist your students and SLP during "TeleSpeech." It is important to acknowledge that the telepractice SLP is your direct supervisor. If you have any questions before, during, or after reviewing this manual, please ask him or her for more details and instruction.

The telepractice paraprofessional I worked with mentioned that she didn't know anything about telepractice prior to being assigned her position. At first she was skeptical about the effectiveness of telepractice, but quickly became an advocate for the program after seeing her students' excitement and improvement. This manual shares tips and suggestions from four SLPs and a paraprofessional with school-based telepractice experience with the hope that it will promote positive telepractice experiences and work relationships in the future.

Best wishes,

Cristina

2. What is telepractice?

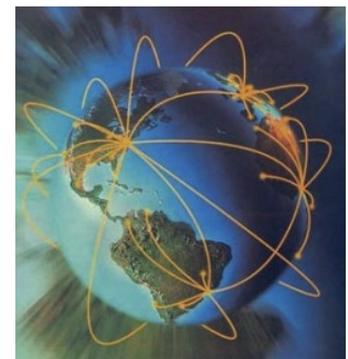
- Telepractice, also known as telerehabilitation, speech teletherapy, and telespeech, is a method of service delivery.
- According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), telepractice is “the application of telecommunications technology to deliver professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client, or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.” (ASHA, 2005b)
 - Examples of telecommunications technology include mobile devices (e.g. iPads, smart phones), desktop computers, videoconferencing equipment, and software.
- Two telepractice models are frequently used in school settings:
 - (1) The store-and-forward (asynchronous) model
 - The transmission of recorded information over mail, fax, the Internet, etc.
 - Ex. During an IEP meeting, the SLP may fax a document to you featuring his or her signature
 - (2) The clinician interactive (synchronous) model
 - Videoconferencing for “real-time” interactions
 - Ex. Throughout a therapy session, the SLP and student view one another on a television screen or computer monitor. The SLP provides the student with immediate feedback on a task



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3. Why telepractice?

- ASHA’s vision as a professional and credentialing association is to “make effective communication accessible and achievable for all.” (ASHA, 2013)
- The Principle of Ethics III in the ASHA Code of Ethics states that SLPs should “support the development of services to fulfill the unmet needs of those they serve.” (Denton, 2003)
- Telepractice may be used to overcome barriers of access due to:
 - Distance
 - Lack of transportation
 - Impaired mobility
 - Lack of specialists (therapists, interpreters, etc.)
- “Telepractice offers the potential to extend clinical services to remote, rural, and underserved populations, and to culturally and linguistically diverse populations.” (ASHA, 2005b)



www.sdmags.net

4. The Benefits & Limitations of Telepractice

- Benefits:
 - Telepractice can potentially and effectively meet the needs of individuals who otherwise may not have access to services
 - As a service delivery model, telepractice can increase work efficiency and productivity due to reduced travel time and bouts of illness
 - Telepractice engages and motivates students who are responsive to technology
 - As technology advances, telecommunications equipment may become increasingly affordable and portable

- Limitations:
 - Technological glitches beyond basic trouble-shooting repairs suspend therapy services until they are resolved by technical support personnel
 - During conversation via videoconferencing, it may be difficult to sustain eye-contact
 - In order to appear as though you are meeting the on-screen person's gaze, you must look directly into the camera instead of his/her face on the tv/computer monitor
 - During therapy sessions, the SLP is unable to make direct physical contact with the student to provide traditional tactile cues and reinforcement or assess muscle tone and strength
 - Individuals who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with telecommunications technology may be apprehensive and question the effectiveness of telepractice
 - At the moment, telepractice project startup/equipment costs can be expensive

5. General TeleSpeech Policies & Procedures

- Telepractice paraprofessionals are recognized as support personnel for speech-language pathology services. Therefore, be mindful of ASHA's Code of Ethics and Scope of Practice for SLPs and SLP assistants. Please take the time to review the following documents created by ASHA's Board of Ethics on support personnel:
 - Issues in Ethics: Support Personnel, <http://www.asha.org/policy/ET2004-00182/>
 - SLP Assistant Scope of Practice, <http://www.asha.org/policy/SP2013-00337/>

- Highlights:
 - You are responsible for the wellbeing of each student under your care. Keep their best interests at heart and do not jeopardize their education, health, safety, etc.
 - As support personnel, you must be supervised and directed by an ASHA-credentialed SLP throughout all speech-language pathology services
 - The SLP is responsible for your training and supervision
 - You may not, in any way, practice speech therapy or any other service beyond your training
 - You may not be assigned tasks that require you to "act" as a clinician

- You are expected to behave in a professional manner – honor commitments and engage in work relationships with dignity and respect
 - Do not violate the ASHA Code of Ethics (ASHA, 2004a & 2004b)
- As a member of the telepractice team, you are encouraged to read the documents below on telepractice. They discuss the history of telepractice, how telepractice has been used to provide speech therapy services, and policies to consider when participating in a telepractice project.
 - ASHA's Telepractice Position Statement: <http://www.asha.org/policy/PS2005-00116.htm>
 - ASHA's Telepractice Technical Report: <http://www.asha.org/policy/TR2005-00152.htm>
 - ASHA's Professional Issues in Telepractice for SLPs: <http://www.asha.org/policy/PI2010-00315.htm>
- Ultimately, therapy services provided through telepractice over a distance must be “comparable in quality to face-to-face services.” (ASHA, 2005a) Client information and therapy sessions must be secured and protected. Be aware of the following federal laws:
 - HIPAA = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
 - FERPA = Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
 - Receive HIPAA training
 - Review the document found online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-hipaa-guidance.pdf> and learn more about how HIPAA and FERPA laws apply to one another.
- It's also important to know about your state's policies and procedures regarding telepractice. Please refer to the following link on updates to state provisions for telepractice: <http://www.asha.org/Practice/telepractice/StateProvisionsUpdateTelepractice/>

6. Telepractice Equipment



“You need good computer service. Having a big screen TV is helpful... You also need to have access to a fax machine and restroom.” – Paraprofessional survey participant

- Here is a list of potential telepractice equipment for both sites. Each component works together with a purpose.
 - Large computer monitor/TV screen



- Allows you, the students, and SLP to comfortably view one another from your respective locations
- High definition cameras with zoom/panning capabilities
 - Gives you and the SLP the opportunity to track students'/SLP's movements around the therapy room and do "close ups" on each students'/the SLP's face
- Microphones/speakers
 - Picks up and transmits voices and sounds
- Digital video recorder
 - Allows the SLP to record sessions for later use during therapy or to send home to students' caregivers for updates and homework assignments
- Computer with Internet access
 - Provides you and the SLP access to email accounts and therapy materials
- Document camera
 - Allows the SLP and students to comfortably share and view library books and other materials during therapy sessions
- Telephone
 - Serves as another line of communication between you, the SLP, school staff, and technology support staff
- Fax machine
 - Quickly sends copies of therapy materials, IEP documents, etc.



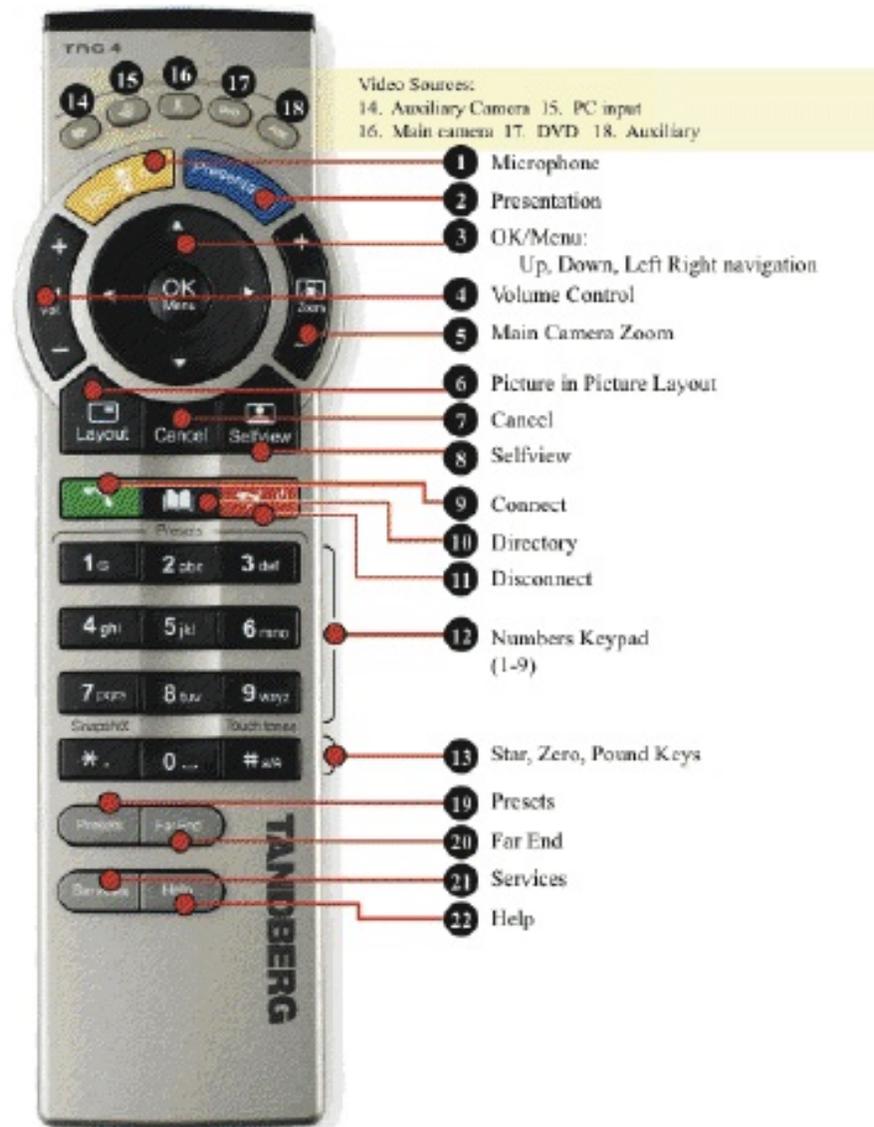
- Remote control – The telepractice equipment will come with a remote control that can do the following:
 - Make the videoconferencing "call" to connect with and see the SLP on your computer/TV screen
 - Raise and lower the computer/TV volume
 - Pan and zoom camera lens
 - Control the camera at the other location remotely (SLP)
 - Manipulate the screen's display to view up to 4 mini images (e.g., document camera, remote site, self-view, and computer screen)



- The following technology affects the quality and security of the images/sounds transmitted via telepractice:
 - An online conferencing platform or telepresence system (e.g. codec with point to point)
 - The system helps make the connection between sites, monitoring picture/sound quality and security (Juenger, 2009)
 - High bandwidth
 - Bandwidth is "the range of frequencies used for transmitting a signal" – the higher the bandwidth, the better the transmission rate and quality of sound/picture
 - Firewall traversal
 - "A technology that creates a secure path through a firewall barrier safely and seamlessly" (www.videocentric.co.uk/benefits/glossary.shtml) – the firewall traversal

is crucial to protecting information from potential onlookers and maintaining compliance with HIPAA

- Once all items are connected, look into basic trouble-shooting for technological glitches... and study the system's remote control. As the paraprofessional, you manage the equipment by informing the SLP of the system's picture/sound quality, and occasionally repositioning the camera or handling the remote control upon the SLP's request.



7. TeleSpeech Space in the School

- Help advocate for a room in your school building that is:
 - Away from noisy or high-traffic areas (e.g., gym, cafeteria, etc.)
 - Telepractice microphones are sensitive – Noise occurring outside the therapy room may interfere with and distort what the SLP hears during the session, affecting the quality of services

- Small enough for therapy, yet large enough for an IEP meeting
 - The therapy room must comfortably seat up to 10-15 people for videoconferencing IEP meetings
 - You may also consider having enough space to safely and efficiently reposition the camera in the room to give the SLP different views of students completing tasks (e.g. move the camera to a location that allows the SLP to see a student interacting with the computer/TV screen)
 - Well lit and painted a light or neutral color (e.g. beige, baby blue) without distracting stripes or busy patterns
 - Stripes, dark hues, and busy patterns may distort the image and affect therapy
 - Bathroom accessible (if possible)
 - An easily accessible bathroom for you and your students will reduce time lost during a session due to “nature calls”
 - Sound absorbent
 - Ensure that the room has carpeting and window curtains to reduce echo and the potential for sound distortion
 - In close proximity to a phone and fax machine
 - Both alternative means of communication come in handy during IEP meetings, therapy sessions, and planning periods in case the videoconferencing connection is lost or information needs to be signed, etc.
- If possible, situate a square or rectangular table in the room, as opposed to a round table, to avoid having the SLP ask students to turn their heads slightly to face the camera during therapy. (Crutchley, Campbell, & Christiana, 2012)

“Find a quiet/sound proof room you can stay in and not be moved.” – Paraprofessional survey participant

8. Documentation & Methods of Communication

- The following is an example of what the SLP may document during each session in addition to client responses and progress. You may consider keeping track of and securely storing this information in the therapy room with your SLP’s guidance.
 - Session date and time
 - Session minutes (e.g., 15, 30, 60 minutes)
 - The names of each individual present/absent
 - Group size (1-3 students)
 - Transmission rates for video/picture and audio
 - Depending on the videoconferencing platform/system used, this information may be obtained from the system’s menu using the remote control
 - Touch base with your SLP about the bare minimum rates for your videoconferencing equipment (e.g., 256 Kbps)
 - Rates may fluctuate throughout the day
 - Video/audio quality

- Poor = sound/video transmission is delayed and video is pixilated/frozen – therapy may not be feasible
 - Fair = audio/video are slightly delayed and/or video/picture is occasionally pixilated
 - Good = image appears as it would in-person, without pixilation or noticeable delays
- As previously noted, telecommunications technology offers a variety of ways to connect and communicate with your SLP. You have the option to use the videoconferencing equipment, telephone, fax machine, email, and standard mail for interactions. Develop a plan with your SLP to determine best communication practices (e.g., use the telephone to acknowledge technical difficulties, the fax machine to send documents, secured email to send messages that do not contain protect health information (PHI), etc.). (ASHA, 2005b & Crutchley, Campbell, & Christiana, 2012)

9. Basic Speech-Language Therapy Format



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- SLPs follow the ASHA Code of Ethics to provide students with effective therapy that utilizes evidence-based practices.
- Therapy targets student goals through activities that explicitly teach information and provides students with opportunities to practice and reach objectives with success. Activities are presented in various formats and may incorporate information students are learning in their classrooms.

- SLPs will reinforce and reward positive behaviors/actions and “fade” undesirable behavior/actions. You may also find that your SLP will create situations that force students to respond or react in specific ways to promote skills (e.g., if a student’s goal is to practice making eye contact and making requests, the SLP may intentionally place a desired object out of reach and wait for the student to request the object before rewarding him/her with it).
- Depending on the student, your SLP may decide to take therapeutic breaks and provide students with opportunities to play games to help motivate them and redirect or regain their attention.
- SLPs are likely to work on one or two goals at a time to avoid overwhelming a student. You may notice that your SLP may praise a student for using a target correctly despite using other aspects of language/sound productions incorrectly. Your SLP will make note of this and keep it in mind as the student makes progress with their goals.
- SLPs are prepared to acknowledge regional dialects – your SLP may not address a child’s accent, word choice, etc. unless it interferes with the child’s academic progress in some documented way. If you are familiar with your community’s dialect and culture, please feel free to share this information with your SLP during planning periods. (Crutchley, 2011)

10. Potential Student Populations

- SLPs may work with school-age children on language, articulation/phonology, resonance, voice, fluency, swallowing, and hearing disorders. However, telepractice services may not be appropriate for all children. Your SLP will determine who qualifies for telepractice services on an individual basis, ensuring that each student receives optimal care.
- Students who participate in telespeech should be able to:
 - Attend to the computer/TV screen and SLP
 - Hear instructions
 - Comprehend and follow simple instructions
 - See the material transmitted on-screen
 - Sit for 15 to 60 minute periods (ASHA, 2005b)



www.teachersofcolor.com

11. Therapy Materials

- Your SLP is responsible for providing and/or suggesting therapy materials for use during therapy sessions. At the beginning of the school year, he or she may physically deliver or mail games, books, and materials (e.g., puppets, prizes, etc) to handle during sessions. Maintain all materials clean, organized, and ideally out of sight in the room. You are encouraged to find out what activities and games motivate students in their classrooms.

- As previously mentioned, your SLP may be interested in incorporating classroom lessons and library books in his/her therapy sessions with students. You may be asked to contact and/or follow-up with teachers to receive class themes and lessons per academic period.
- CD-ROMs and DVDs may be used and managed by the SLP during sessions. Please inform him or her of the software's status on your computer/TV screen (e.g., clear audio/video, legible print)
- Your SLP may decide to use the internet during sessions. The following are examples of websites that feature fun and academic games for school-aged children:
 - Book Adventure: <http://www.bookadventure.com/Home.aspx>
 - Discovery Kids: <http://kids.discovery.com/>
 - Fun Brain: <http://www.funbrain.com/>
 - Kaboose: <http://funschool.kaboose.com/>
 - Kids Reads: <http://www.kidsreads.com/>
 - National Geographic Kids: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/>
 - Nickelodeon: <http://www.nick.com/>
 - PBS for Kids: <http://pbskids.org/>
 - Stacks for Kids: www.scholastic.com/kids/
 - Starfall: <http://www.starfall.com/>
 - Storyline Online: <http://www.storylineonline.net/>
 - TheraSimplicity: <https://www.therasimplicity.com/>
 - Time for Kids: <http://www.timeforkids.com/>

12. Facilitating TeleSpeech & IEP Meetings

- The following list describes the role and responsibilities of the telepractice paraprofessional.
 - The telepractice paraprofessional:
 - Assists in establishing the videoconferencing connection
 - Trouble-shoots minor technical difficulties
 - Aides in the scheduling of sessions with SLP and classroom teachers
 - Aides in the scheduling of IEP meetings with parents/guardians and IEP team members
 - Communicates regularly with teachers, parents/guardians, and the community
 - Refers questions about therapy services to the SLP
 - Advocates for telepractice services in the school
 - Gathers classroom lesson plans from teachers
 - Escorts students between sessions to/from classrooms
 - Positions clients in front of the computer screen
 - Establishes rapport with students
 - Monitors and helps manage student behavior
 - Repositions equipment upon the SLP's request (e.g. move the camera to capture a student pointing to his/her response on the TV/computer screen)

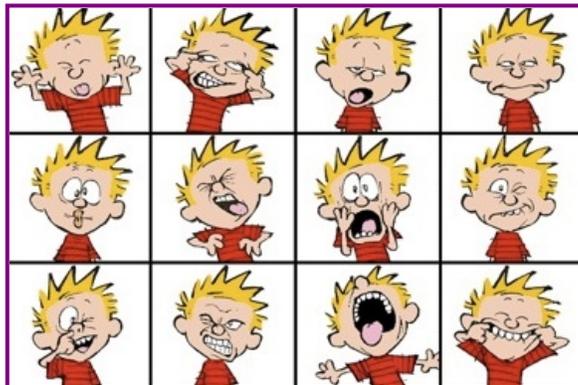


- Maintains the therapy room neat and organized
- Facilitates therapy by completing the SLP's requests
- Informs the SLP of any needs
- Receives and shares documents and information with teachers, school administrators, and the SLP during IEP meetings
- Follows speech therapy and site-specific policies and procedures
- Assists with any other duties assigned by the SLP not mentioned (Crutchley, Campbell, & Christiana, 2012)

"[I was a] Distance Learning Instructional Assistant... I actively participated [during sessions] by taking notes, operating equipment and interacting with clients as needed. I communicated with parents and served as a telepractice liaison/advocate." – Paraprofessional survey participant

- Telepractice paraprofessionals may not analyze and interpret recorded data or provide direct therapy to students during telepractice sessions. Please discuss what you should do if anyone asks you to do something beyond your scope of practice with your SLP. (ASHA, 2004b & 2005b)

13. Behavioral Management



www.speechbuddy.com

- Behavioral management occurs similarly to the way it would be managed during in-person services. Follow the guidance of the SLP in order to prevent behavioral problems and manage disruptive behaviors.

"[Under the direction of the SLP, the paraprofessional] can check with the teacher about ways to handle behavior problems... make changes to the environment to minimize distractions or enhance attention, such as moving the child closer to the monitor..."

14. Telepractice Paraprofessional Skills/Qualities

- Below are quotes from individuals who participated in an online survey regarding the skills and qualities needed to be an effective telepractice paraprofessional.

"They need to be well organized, prompt, and able to communicate with the SLP, students, and staff." – Telepractice paraprofessional participant

"Organized, punctual, professional speaking and writing skills, positive and enthusiastic attitude, able to compromise and work as a 'team player,' willing to problem-solve, resourceful, willing to approach new responsibilities with a positive attitude, knowledgeable of the staff and resources at the site where telepractice will be provided, competent in basic computer skills; understands and accepts role as a paraprofessional." – SLP survey participant

"The person needs to enjoy the population served... [and have a] willingness to follow policies and procedures and protect people's personal health information." – SLP survey participant

15. The Paraprofessional's Impact on Telepractice

"[The paraprofessional] is the glue that makes every aspect of telepractice run efficiently and effectively." – SLP survey participant

- Responses to the qualtrics.com survey entitled *School-based Telepractice Questions for Paraprofessionals, SLPs, and School Administrators* indicate that paraprofessionals involved in telepractice programs have unique responsibilities due to distance and equipment. Telepractice paraprofessionals may serve as the therapists' eyes, ears, and hands on location during sessions.



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