

Tele-O&M: Exploring New Ways to Provide O&M Services to Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments

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What is Teleintervention?

“Teleintervention” involves using telecommunication technology (e.g., computers; the internet; and synchronous videoconferencing applications, such as Skype™ or FaceTime™) to deliver professional services to clients at a distance. Early pioneers in healthcare and rehabilitation services have identified ethical and legal issues, including the professional responsibilities necessary for quality teleintervention services.

- Research of Early Intervention – Deaf / Hard of Hearing (EI –D/HH) services is ongoing in the United States
- Australian Vision Programs have been using teleintervention for a decade.
- Early Intervention (EI) services in Nevada use teleintervention as a Part C model.

Benefits of the Teleintervention Model

- Increased access could make quality orientation and mobility (O&M) services more available for young children with blindness or visual impairment (B/VI) and their families.
- Parents and providers are more engaged in the “coaching” model, which is best practice in EI. (Olsen, Fiechtl, & Rule, 2012)
- Cost savings are significant if weekly services are indicated.

Barriers to the Teleintervention Model

- *Technology*: Although videoconferencing software is more available and accessible, equipment and a protocol need to be piloted.
- *Implementation*: State EI programs will need to approve protocols. (Currently 14 states are practicing teleintervention)
- *Reimbursement*: Contracts will need to be negotiated on a state-to-state basis.

Results of the International Feasibility Survey

Most respondents thus far have indicated that the use of the teleintervention service delivery model to provide O&M services to young children with B/VI and their families in their service areas has potential.

Next Steps...

- Develop Tele-O&M protocol.
- Conduct a pilot study with more participants to evaluate protocol.
- Compare results of pilot study with initial exploratory study (mainly, feasibility, effectiveness, and participant / provider satisfaction).

Contact Information

If you have questions about our study or would like to participate in our survey, please contact us!

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Reference

Olsen, S., Fiechtl, B., & Rule, S. (2012). An evaluation of virtual home visits in early intervention: Feasibility of “virtual intervention.” *The Volta Review*, 112, 267-281.