

Speech Therapy Services Made Possible in a Rural Community via Telehealth Supervision and Mentorship

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Purpose

Speech therapy services are an integral component to any pediatric or neurological rehabilitation program. Many rural healthcare facilities struggle to recruit speech-language pathologists due to limited access to mentorship opportunities for new clinicians.

Ashley Regional Medical Center in Vernal, UT and the University of Utah partnered to provide a distant mentorship for their new speech-language pathologist during his clinical fellowship.

Clinical Fellowship for SLPs

Following graduation, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) requires 18 hours of direct supervision during a new clinician's fellowship period for certification purposes.

An alternative means of supervision (e.g. tele-supervision) is a viable option to complete the requirements for the fellowship. A telehealth connection became the ideal mechanism for providing effective mentorship for ARMC's new SLP.

Method

A formal request was submitted to ASHA in order to approve an alternative method of supervision through tele-services.

Upon approval from ASHA, the clinical fellow was able to connect via Vidyo, a secure telehealth connection, and conduct therapy sessions with the mentor supervising. This fellowship was made possible by the resources available through the University of Utah's telehealth center, IT assistance at ARMC, and the approval of ASHA.

Benefits

Through this partnership with the University of Utah, mentorship from an experienced clinician, and telehealth services, ARMC was provided the tools needed to develop a successful and continually growing speech program in Vernal, UT.

The use of telehealth connections provided a nationally-approved (ASHA) means of direct supervision for a clinical fellow to complete his clinical fellowship and receive full state and national accreditation.

Additionally, ARMC saved on travel expenses as the University supervisor was able to observe several sessions at a time without the time commitments of traveling to Vernal.

Why is this important?

Offering a clinical fellowship through telehealth supervision provides rural hospitals with a wider field of applicants as well as provides more occupation opportunities in a hospital setting for clinical fellows. Access to direct supervision via telehealth services is a viable solution and provides new clinicians with a mentor without travel needs or expenses.

Developing a new service line in a rural community can be made possible by telehealth services and can result in improving community health.