



First Steps Bulletin

Date: 02/25/2010

Topic: Distance Therapy Provisions

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First Steps acknowledges that there are instances in which services may best be provided through distance therapy. Delivery of service may include strategies such as teletherapy, which involve the use of technology to bring the child, parent and provider together during the delivery of services. Use of distance service provisions must be based on the needs of the child and family. Prior to the delivery of such services, the following steps must be followed:

1. Distance therapy may only be authorized when it is in the best interest of the family to do so.
2. The service provider should be experienced and comfortable with the delivery of service through technology via secure encryption method.
3. A prior authorization must be obtained from the State before beginning this mode of therapy.
4. Distance service provisions, should be written into the IFSP as a possible strategy and include the manner in which the service should be provided.
5. When using web communication, the family must have computer/internet access in the home. The parent and provider must know how to use the equipment prior to the first therapy session. The team should address potential technical problems, prior to starting the service. While no additional fees may be billed to the family, providers may provide additional hardware or software to the family. Any agreement to use such equipment will be the responsibility of the provider.
6. The parent or caregiver must be present and involved throughout the therapy session.
7. Billing for distance therapy is to be billed at the on-site rate for the provider's specialty.
8. Just as with direct person to person therapy, the provider must provide direct attention to the service being delivered and may not engage in outside unrelated activities during the session.
9. Services must be provided in a private/confidential location, via a secure encrypted internet site, to protect the privacy of the family.
10. A Face-to-Face Sheet must be completed and mailed to the parent/caregiver participating in the therapy session, within 2 business days of the service. If the caregiver participating in the therapy session is not the child's parent, a copy of the face to face form must also be sent to the parent. The provider must list the mode of therapy (ex. Teletherapy) in the parent signature line. All other components of the Face to Face sheet must also be completed, including the time the session started and ended. With approval of the parent, copies of the face to face sheet may be emailed to the parent in lieu of mailing through the U.S. postal service.

Note: *This method of service will be held to the same billing audit standard as traditional billing audits conducted by/through the State. The family will need to have a signed release at the SPOE authorizing the provider to list "via webcam" or other mode of therapy on the parent signature line on the Face-to-Face form.*