



## Teletherapy Guidelines for First Steps Services

**Definition:** Teletherapy is a method to provide First Steps services using technology. Teletherapy occurs when the provider is in a location separate from the family and uses the internet/computer to talk to the parent and observe the child and parent in their home.

**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Considerations:** Teletherapy may be appropriate for First Steps services when there is no provider available in the natural environment. The use of teletherapy should not take the place of a home visit if a provider is available to deliver services in a natural environment. Face-to-face visits with the family are still considered best practice in delivering First Steps services. The decision to use teletherapy is an IFSP team decision based on the family's needs, not based on the needs of a provider or the System Point of Entry (SPOE).

**Provider Considerations:** Prior to conducting teletherapy, providers must consider the following:

- **Licensure/Training.** Providers must follow the requirements of the licensing board for their disciplines regarding the use of teletherapy. Providers should have training in using telecommunication methods for delivering services.
- **Privacy/Confidentiality.** Providers must verify the services will be delivered in accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as required for all First Steps services. This includes delivering teletherapy in a private and confidential setting to ensure personally identifiable information is not overheard by others.
- **Technology/Equipment.** First Steps will not purchase equipment to deliver teletherapy. Equipment loaned to the family is the responsibility of the provider, not the First Steps program. Providers must have a plan to address technical problems before conducting teletherapy.
- **Authorization.** Teletherapy services are authorized under a separate code. Providers must verify the child's IFSP indicates teletherapy services have been authorized before conducting these visits.

**Parent Considerations:** Prior to receiving teletherapy, parents must be informed of the following:

- **Technology/Equipment.** Parents must have access to the internet/computer and know how to use the technology before receiving teletherapy visits.
- **Privacy.** If the internet connection or website used for teletherapy is not secure, parents risk maintaining privacy because information shared during teletherapy is open to anyone who has a computer/cell phone within range.
- **Teletherapy visits.** A parent or caregiver must be present and participate throughout the duration of a teletherapy visit.
- **Cost.** Parents cannot incur additional fees or service charges in order to receive teletherapy.
- **Consent.** Parents must provide written consent to use teletherapy before teletherapy visits can occur.