Telehealth Resources and Strategies
April 2020

Remote health connection, assessment, and care planning have been increasingly of interest across the United States and are now a necessary component of health care services.

Due to COVID-19 protections for patients and health care team members, there are less opportunities for in-person interactions. This can be hard for all involved and can also present opportunity for innovation, which can lead to increased access to some services.

For expectant and new families who do not have continuous phone or internet access, telehealth and virtual health present significant barriers to care. Screening for such structural determinants of health may be helpful as part of health history and periodic check-ins for patients that you serve. Health care practices may also need to upgrade their equipment to provide telehealth services, including software and reliable, secure internet connections. They may also have to review billing and record sharing processes.

Definition
As outlined by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology: The term "**telemedicine**" often is used to refer to traditional clinical diagnosis and monitoring that are delivered by technology. The term "**telehealth**" refers to the technology-enhanced health care framework that includes services such as virtual visits, remote patient monitoring and mobile health care to make telemedicine successful.

The following information may be helpful as you navigate this opportunity to care for mothers and their families.

Clinical and policy resources addressing telemedicine and COVID-19:

American Medical Association (AMA)
The American Medical Association provides information on best practices for telehealth. Some of the information includes: ensuring your malpractice insurance will cover telehealth, understanding the payment and policies for different telehealth vendors, and ensuring your EHR will allow telehealth functionality. The AMA has developed an online module for telemedicine.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
The CMS has broadened access to telehealth services.

The National Consortium of Telehealth Resources Centers (TRC)
https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org
Support for the Telehealth Resource Centers is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to help organizations and practices advance telehealth, with a focus on rural healthcare. TRC offers webinars which are recorded and posted to YouTube. You can search for COVID and other terms in the search box; current offerings include a COVID toolkit.

American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) Committee Opinion 798
ACOG Committee Opinion 798 is an open-access article published in 2020 that outlines considerations for telemedicine practitioners, including: adaptive leadership, licensure considerations, insurance coverage, compliance with state laws and medical board definitions, liability insurance policies, equipment logistics, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy and security rules.

The Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP)
https://www.cchpca.org/
Provides information on telehealth coverage policies for COVID-19, which are updated daily.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is now recommending the use of telehealth and/or telephonic services to provide evaluation and treatment for patients during COVID-19. Additionally, SAMHSA has provided guidance on the flexibility of disclosure of patient information during a medical emergency.

US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Agency
The US Department of Justice, DEA has updated information on drug enforcement and prescriptions in a national emergency that are specifically related to telehealth.

Recent articles addressing telemedicine and COVID-19:

Social Determinants of Health
In the article How the Coronavirus Affects Social Determinants of Health (SDoH), Sarah Health identifies the intersection of COVID-19 on SDoH related to maternal and family health.

Telemedicine and Pregnancy Care
In the article Telemedicine and Pregnancy Care by Weigel, Frederiksen, and Ranji, the authors provide information on maternity care programs using telemedicine, research studies on maternity care outcomes, at-home monitoring, consultation with specialists, Medicaid program reimbursements, and health equity considerations. Finally, the article provides an overview of types of maternity care telemedicine services (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1

Many healthcare services can be delivered via telemedicine during and after pregnancy

- ■ Services delivered during pregnancy (prenatal care)
- ■ Services delivered after pregnancy (postpartum care)
- ■ Services delivered during and after pregnancy (prenatal/postpartum)