### Recommendations for effectively working with your technology partners

**Telehealth Clinic IT Staff (may be IT from sponsoring agency or the school):**
- Work closely with the IT team. The Information Technology (IT) Director or designated contact needs to have a clear understanding of how school telehealth works. Technology leadership must be involved to develop effective network security and HIPAA compliant privacy systems. Working with the IT department on clinic-specific processes, such as the electronic health record and billing, will help to provide a site-specific orientation to school telehealth.
- Ensure the IT team appreciates that any technical difficulty with the hardware/software and peripheral devices leaves the clinic unable to provide patient care. Fixing the issues should be considered highest priority.
- Ideally a dedicated IT staff member who has been involved with the project will be available during office hours.
- Consider scheduling regular meetings to resolve non-urgent issues on a routine basis.
- When new IT staff are hired, they should be provided a tour of the school clinic and an orientation to the hardware/software so they may assist in troubleshooting.
- Document lessons learned from previous helpdesk resolutions to assist in future occurrences.

**Telehealth Vendor / Distributor:**
- Develop a relationship with your telehealth distributor (e.g. AMD Global Telemedicine). Know what they offer as far as technical assistance and equipment training sessions. Using the education offered by the telemedicine distributor will provide a thorough orientation to the equipment.
- If a site is experiencing connectivity issues, the problem may be related to faulty equipment. It is important to work with the equipment vendor for support and resolution; faulty equipment will need to be returned for a replacement. Familiarize yourself with their policy regarding shipment of replacement parts, peripheral devices, and technical support.
- Budgeting to have additional peripheral devices to use when others are in for repair is important.
- It is best to check with the equipment vendor before attempting to make any modifications to the units. Ideally, have your IT staff work directly with the external IT tech on the phone.
- There was a case report of a well-meaning IT group that dismantled its school’s telehealth equipment to build additional safeguards into it, and upon reassembly the equipment did not function properly, including a lack of stethoscope audio and overall audio. The IT team had to spend additional time working with the vendor to regain functionality.
• Portable unit audio issues are often resolved by configuring changes to the playback settings. Work with the equipment vendor for instructions on how to make the necessary changes. It may be as simple as moving a button to the down position! Poor stethoscope audio quality (e.g., picking up surrounding sounds, intermittent sound) can often be resolved by turning down the receiving volume or replacing the cart’s transmitter box attachment to the stethoscope.

• If picture resolution quality is distorted (e.g., poor quality images from the exam camera, otoscope image distortion), it may be necessary to troubleshoot not only with the IT team and equipment vendor, but also with outside network teams. In one case, a school site’s pictures were distorted because of a mismatch between the site’s old legacy routers and their internet service provider’s specifications. It is important to note that visits can still be successful in spite of picture issues, but it is ideal to find a solution.

• Schedule weekly tests with each cart at originating school sites and distant telehealth sites well before going “live.” It is very important for RNs at the originating school clinic site to perform on-site testing prior to linking to real time visits.

• Trial-runs will be most beneficial if a standardized process is put into place prior to testing the system, including formalized procedures that include holding the equipment, taking pictures, and saving images to upload into the EHR. It is highly recommended to visit a site that is already “live” to learn their process and “tips and tricks” for equipment usage. If possible, include key players from your program at this site meeting.

• Technology needs to be consistent for success. Remind schools that clinic work occurs year round. IT should notify the school clinic of planned service shut downs for upgrades, in order for the clinic to plan around periods of shut downs. If there are wired connections between originating and distant sites, consider a wireless tower connection — point to point wireless connection.

• Document and post steps for turning the telehealth unit on in the AM and off in the PM; instructions for using accessories like the stethoscope, otoscope, and Web Cam; and instructions for face-to-face teleconferencing should be posted or easily accessed.

  • Be sure to test equipment and walk through a mock visit before going live.
  • Check your equipment each morning.
  • Have an extra otoscope and light bulbs on hand (light bulbs are necessary for the equipment to function as intended).
  • Update Java on an ongoing basis.
  • Turn the cart on/off every few days for a full reboot.