



ENRICHING THE COMMUNITY

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF
FAMILY ENRICHMENT NETWORK

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FEN Therapists Provide Tele-therapy

In a typical week, Family Enrichment Network's staff of 12 therapists (including, physical, occupational and speech therapy), provide services to over 100 different preschool students who are in need of therapy for developmental delays or diagnosed medical disorders. When school closures occurred on March 16, 2020, due to the State of Emergency caused by COVID-19, all therapy abruptly came to a halt. When it became apparent that this would be a prolonged closure, FEN's therapy staff not only reached out to families to provide guidance and "at home activities," but pursued learning a new skill – "tele-therapy."

Tele-therapy for therapists involves much more than video calling with a child on a smart phone. There are very specific NYS education, medical insurance, and county requirements that must be met in terms of confidentiality, obtaining parental consent, and securing a HIPPA compliant internet videoconferencing platform. There was also a need to acquire additional equipment for FEN therapists to engage in online therapy. Furthermore, the therapists engaged in formal continuing education courses to learn how to technically navigate videoconferencing, and to learn strategies to engage children "online," which included learning about online visual materials and activity websites, as well as creating their own materials. The therapists engaged in a combined total of over 75 hours of continuing education to learn both new skills necessary for tele-therapy and to improve their own clinical skills.

Starting April 24, 2020, we had the capability to electronically email parents a consent form to allow their children to participate in tele-therapy. Over 50 preschool students were enrolled in tele-therapy in the spring. Therapists were very happy to engage in what they are passionate about – helping preschool students develop and overcome their delays and disabilities!

We were very happy to have schools open again this summer and fall so that the therapists could start working with preschoolers in person! Currently, therapists are providing therapy both in-person and via tele-therapy for students who are not participating in in-person instruction. FEN also now has the permanent capability to offer remote services anytime as needed.

To learn more, visit our website at
www.familyenrichment.org or call us at (607) 723-8313