

Enhanced Communication and Accountability Using Therap's Mobile Applications

Background - HCBS

Since introducing its first commercial project in 2003, Therap has been committed to providing state of the art industry solutions that address the problems and issues organizations that support people with disabilities are facing, and to find ways for technology to create opportunities for organizations providing long term services and supports.

The disability rights movement continues to make great strides towards securing equal opportunities for all people with disabilities. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and other civil rights legislation, this movement has transformed opportunities for people with disabilities. The Supreme Court's 1999 decision in the "Olmstead" case held that individuals with disabilities have the right to receive state-funded supports and services and live in the community rather than an institution.

The Center for Medicaid & Medicare Service (CMS) created the Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver option in 1983, but its use for long term services and supports increased rapidly after 2005 when HCBS became a formal state plan option. The HCBS waiver program gave States the flexibility to develop and tailor their programs to the specific needs of the populations they wished to serve, and waiver services vary greatly among states.

HCBS provided opportunities for individuals receiving Medicaid to receive services in their own home and support within the community. In 2014, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced new rules that had a positive impact on the nature of residential and day service settings. The intent was to ensure that HCBS settings were different from institutional settings, to enhance community integration, to optimize independence in making life choices, to promote service delivery in more integrated settings, and to expand the use of person-centered planning.

Subsequently, vocational programs started phasing out of sheltered workshop programs and looked to employ individuals in integrated settings. The move from **facility-based day services** to a **more community-based day service** allowed individuals access to more services within the community to support their own employment. Individuals began to have similar opportunities as people without disabilities have in the workforce, in terms of access to employment, competitive wages, and have gained more control of their personal resources.

Individuals have opportunities to make their own choices regarding supports and services.

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They have increased input about where they live and who they want to live with. Different living program models were developed with the residential span moving from individuals living in an institution, nursing home, or intermediate care facility to living in smaller community residential settings, foster homes, or living in their family home with added supports and services. Individuals also have more options to live independently in their own home or apartment or in a shared living arrangement with a roommate of their choice.

There has been a dramatic shift in where people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities live. According to the most recent In-Home and Residential Long-Term Supports and Services for Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (RISP) report: The proportion (and number) of LTSS recipients in non-family IDD settings of 6 or fewer people increased from 8% (20,400 people) in 1977 to 82% (420,681 people) in 2016. In 2016 approximately 146,974 people lived in their own home, 63,750 lived in foster settings, and 191,599 lived in congregate settings.

Data Collection at the Point of Service

Throughout its history, Therap is and has been committed to addressing the shift to community settings. Since 2012, Therap has been developing mobile applications. Consistent with its commitment to new technologies, Therap recently transitioned its entire product from a computer based interface to a responsive design platform that more effectively meets the requirements of new options for smartphones and tablets as well as continuing to develop additional apps for these devices. Therap remains firmly committed to enhancing and utilizing these types of new technologies as they become available to improve the experience of the end user.

As community based service provision continues to be more prevalent, providers need to access information from multiple locations, which may include at home, an office, or in the community. A theoretical underpinning of Therap is that data should be collected as close to the point of service and as soon after the time of service as possible. Waiting and travelling not only make it harder to remember events accurately but also make it unlikely that a direct support professional (DSP) can easily check with an individual or family member to verify what transpired. Quality documentation is much more valuable than documentation that only meets the requirements for auditing purposes. Highly accurate documentation enhances communication, engenders trust, and leads to quality outcomes.

Mobile Technology

The improvement of mobile technology over the past twenty-five years has allowed

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healthcare professionals many opportunities to apply it in their work environments. Mobile devices today have more memory, batteries that last longer, larger screens, and cameras that are high definition. Devices are faster, more compact, and more reliable. They have become a convenient and efficient way for service providers to have easy access to information, add data about service provision, and improve quality care. When DSPs are able to “do their paperwork” at the time of a visit using the mobile app, a natural opportunity for information sharing and collaboration with families, community supports, and individuals occurs. These interactions help to make records more accurate and meaningful. This allows for greater collaboration as all stakeholders are able to actively participate and engage in the circle of care and support.

Therap’s Mobile Applications can be used on Android & IOS platforms and by downloading them from the Google Play Store and the IOS App Store. Employees sign into the mobile application using their own secure login username and password. The secure access allows for each user to have caseload based information about the individuals they are providing services to and can provide real-time service documentation in the community in a HIPAA-compliant and secure manner.

The following modules can be accessed within the Therap Mobile Application:

- **Mobile TLogs: Communication Notes**
DSPs can enter daily communication and progress notes about an individual or a program that are time and date stamped. When they do this, their electronic signature is captured and recorded. They can access and read notes that are written by their colleagues from any location. When a photo is uploaded, it is HIPPA compliant. It saves only to the Therap system and is never saved on the mobile device.
- **Mobile ISP Data: Goal and Outcome Tracking**
Goal and Outcome Tracking provides the DSP the means to collect and record service data to track the progress of an individual toward goals set in the yearly Service Plan. DSPs are able to capture a signature from the individual or a family member to verify that the service was delivered. Through use of the GPS location tracker, the system is able to capture the time in and out and the location of the service they are delivering. Photo upload is available.
- **Mobile MAR: Medication Administration Record**
Medical information is readily available to DSPs. They can record an individual’s prescribed medications, information about the individual’s health status and medical

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diagnoses, and how to contact health care providers while supporting individuals in community settings.

- **Mobile Scheduling/EVV: Clock-in and out**
Providers have the ability to build employee schedules for individuals and programs. Employees see their assignments and check in and out in real time . They can also self-check-in if a shift is not currently on their schedule. The location where the service is delivered is recorded through the GPS location tracker, ensuring accountability. Mileage tracking features are also available. The opportunity for voice recording is available, as well as the ability to obtain an electronic signature from the individual or family member to verify the service was delivered. The application has an offline capability for when the internet is not available. Data can be uploaded later when the internet can be accessed. Another available feature to users, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), is a phone based check in and check out option that can be used when the internet is not available.
- **Password Reset**
The Mobile Application gives administrators the option to reset staff passwords.

Jamie Glover, Quality Assurance Specialist from The Progress Center in Maine, explained how her agency has benefited by using Therap's mobile applications:

"Using Therap's mobile applications allows our staff to document in real time ensuring the accuracy of the progress notes. Staff are not having to carry around pads of paper to make notes or try to remember prompts that have been given when working on a task or goal. Notes are never lost or forgotten to be turned in, as they could be with paper notes. The mobile app allows for touch pad signatures to satisfy the regulation of guardian signatures on all children's community supports documentation. We also use Therap's mobile application to satisfy the EVV requirement. It has been an easy adjustment for our staff who are already used to the way that the dashboard is set up and the way that Therap works."

Therap's mobile application offers many advantages to providers of community-based services and supports:

- **Recording data at the time of service delivery increases accuracy**

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- Recording data at the time of service delivery saves time
- Staff has access, at their fingertips, to information about the individual's care plan and specific guidance about service delivery
- Staff can immediately access vital information needed to ensure a speedy and appropriate response in an emergency
- Staff can communicate with one another when in the field, saving time and enhancing the quality of the supports and services they deliver
- The tools promote higher quality communication with individuals, families, and community members
- Staff has the ability to track service goals leading to improved quality care and helping providers become more flexible in the way they provide services within the community;
- Using Therap's Scheduling/EVV module meets the 21st Century Cures Act federal requirement for EVV and verifies information about all waiver-funded personal care services and home health services, increasing accountability.

When an agency chooses to give employees mobile devices so they can use Therap's Mobile applications, many benefits accrue:

- Staff convenience and ease of use
- Time is saved and overall efficiency is improved
- Accountability requirements are met
- Individuals and their families are more fully included in decision making and service delivery
- Quality is improved

Mobile computing has quickly become part of everyday life, even more so in the era of social distancing. We have known for some time that mobile workforces are the future and that future is here now. Businesses and individuals are finding a workaround through the use of technology and it is likely they will continue to invest in the resources they need to work remotely.

The ability to communicate remotely has become a critical piece in the delivery of supports and services to individuals receiving HCBS services. Therap continues to be at the cutting edge of mobile documentation and communication technology in this field. Ensuring the tools that individuals, their families, the organizations that serve them, and the agencies overseeing their health, safety, and the quality of the supports they receive will continue to evolve. Therap users know that they count on the applications they use to be reliable, secure, easy to use, HIPAA compliant, and essential parts of quality programming.

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