Telepractice uses the Internet to provide face to face speech services remotely. St. Cloud Area School District 742 is using telepractice to provide speech services remotely at the following non-public schools:

- All Saints Academy
- Cathedral
- Prince of Peace
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton
- St. Cloud Christian School
- St. Johns
- St. Mary’s Help of Christian

The public-school base that serves these sites is located at the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). There will be one Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) providing Speech/Language services via telepractice.

Some of the major advantages of telepractice are that: it is highly effective for self directed students, it is convenient, service time is high quality (especially when the scheduled sessions begin and end on time), it minimizes the amount of instructional time the student is out of their classroom, it reduces transportation costs for students or staff, and students often achieve their speech goals sooner.

Telepractice may not work for all students or in all non-public schools. Individual Service Plan (ISP) teams must consider the student’s characteristics, their level of need, as well as the physical site where telepractice will occur when considering whether telepractice is an appropriate service delivery option. Telepractice may not be as effective as in person or small group settings for some students. For example, a student may not be a candidate for telepractice if they are easily distracted or have significant language needs.

Effectiveness will also be impacted by the environment in which the telepractice equipment is set up and the level of technological supports available at each non-public school site. For best results, the telepractice equipment should be set up in a private room and be ready for the student to use when they are scheduled to start service.

**Considerations when identifying students who can benefit from receiving speech services via Telepractice**

1. Student characteristics will impact the efficacy of telepractice. The maturity of the student as well as their ability to sustain attention and control impulses correlate positively with success. The level of responsibility is also a consideration as therapeutic intervention time is lost if the student is not ready for or on time for their scheduled appointment.
Building a therapeutic relationship is a key factor in a student's progress and success so the student's level of introversion or extroversion should be considered. The building of a therapeutic relationship between the student and SLP is often slower over the Internet and may be more difficult for students who are more introverted. These students may do better with direct service in a small group or in person sessions.

If behavioral concerns arise, they should be documented and recorded in progress notes or on the ISP, and the ISP team should assess whether telepractice is the best fit for the student.

If the student’s progress on their ISP goals is not sufficient, the ISP team may need to consider the more traditional model of busing the student to a public school for in-person services.

2. The type of communication disorder is also a factor in determining the appropriateness of telepractice. Telepractice works best for articulation students that already have the ability to produce all sounds and are working at the sentence to conversation level. It also works well for students with needs in the area of language and with some fluency issues. While District 742 has not yet provided services via telepractice in the area of voice, other districts’ providers have reported doing so successfully. Situations in which telepractice service is not the most effective service model for students include:

   a. when a student needs physical assistance to produce the sound. Telepractice will not allow a clinician to assist manually.
   
   b. when air-flow sounds, unvoiced sounds, plurals or past tense are the focus of intervention. These sounds are difficult to hear over the Internet, making coaching difficult and imprecise.

3. The set-up location of telepractice stations needs to be private at both locations so as to provide a quiet work space and uninterrupted speech sessions. Sound transmits with the best quality when one person talks at a time. Background noise will be picked up and interfere with the quality of sound transmitted and can even “freeze” conversations during the session. If staff are talking or copy machines are running in the background, these sounds will also be picked up and interfere with the telepractice transmissions often resulting in lost time for therapy. The SLP and student may need to set rules for behavior during telepractice sessions and review them often to insure content transmits smoothly and therapy time via telepractice is maximized.

4. Both the public and non-public broadband Internet service must be adequate for telepractice services.
   a. If either site has inadequate service or technology, the therapy session may be disconnected or substandard.
   
   b. Technology support needs to be available on-site to ensure the Internet service and equipment is ready to use when the session is scheduled to begin. Problems with either of these factors will adversely affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the telepractice service delivery model.
5. The availability of staff support at the non-public site will influence effectiveness. Initially students will need assistance learning how to “log on” for their sessions and/or reminders to start on time. As with any technology, there is occasional trouble shooting that may arise and an adult on site will be needed to help. Lastly, almost every student will need redirection, reminders, or limits set from time to time.

6. Scheduling and availability of staff/student also need to be considered. These two factors impact both the scheduling of sessions as well as make-up sessions.

   a. There are limited times that Speech Language Pathologists are available to provide service via telepractice. Times to provide telepractice are also limited by the non-public’s staff’s availability.

   b. Any session missed due to the absence of a service provider will be rescheduled and made up. Every effort will be made to notify the student and staff at the non-public site in a timely manner of any cancellation. If the SLP has not made a computer connection within five (5) minutes of the scheduled service time, the student should go back to their classroom. Again this session will be made up.

If you have questions about telepractice, please contact the Special Education Program Director at 320-370-8077.