

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT | THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK | ALBANY, NY 12234

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

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New York State Education Department Guidelines for Telepractice in Speech-Language Pathology in Schools

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Telepractice is a remote service delivery model that utilizes telecommunications technology (i.e., video with audio) as the medium for the provision of speech and language therapy services. School districts have responsibility to ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided for all eligible students with disabilities. The use of telepractice in the speech-language profession can be a means for schools to meet the related services needs of students with disabilities when traditional in-person speech and language service delivery methods are not feasible (e.g., in areas of the state with personnel shortages of speech and language therapists).

Use of telepractice speech and language services does not negate a district's obligation to maintain the appropriate and necessary staff needed to deliver the required services in students' individualized education programs (IEPs). Specifically, the use of telepractice cannot replace a school district's teachers of speech and language disabilities. Rather it should be used as a tool to assist districts to provide a student with speech and language related services that may not otherwise be provided. For guidance on when a school district may contract with a non-profit entity to provide related services, please review the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) guidance and Question and Answer document on contracts for instruction. These documents can be found at <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/resources/contractsforinstruction/home.html>.

Telepractice speech and language services may be an appropriate method of service delivery for some students based on their individual needs. To ensure the appropriate recommendations are made for students with disabilities and that speech and language services provided through telepractice are as effective as services provided in-person, NYSED has established the following guidelines relating to the use of speech-language telepractice:

School districts should consider telepractice for students with disabilities only when traditional in-person speech and language service delivery methods are not feasible.

Room location, design, lighting, and other environmental factors must be optimized to ensure the quality of video and audio data transmission and minimize as much as possible, ambient noise and visual distractions. Districts should consider environmental factors such as safety, privacy, lighting, seating and equipment when determining whether telepractice should be used in the provision of speech and language services.

The effectiveness of speech and language services delivered via telepractice should be regularly evaluated (e.g., satisfaction surveys, monitoring the student's progress on IEP goals and objectives).

For guidance from Office of Professions, see <https://www.op.nysed.gov/speech-language-pathology>.

For guidance