



Advancing Whole Child Health Through Telehealth

January – December 2021

Summary

The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) has elevated the essential role of telehealth in improving access to health care for children and families. Simultaneously, the pandemic continues to negatively harm the mental health and wellbeing of our state's children, and has created additional barriers to accessing care, especially for low-income children and children of color. Whether in-person or virtual, schools continue to serve as community hubs for families, often facilitating access to critical health and social services in addition to education.

Part of HealthNet's Community Connections forums, this project will explore how California can expand telehealth solutions in school settings to address the urgent mental and behavioral health needs of children in historically marginalized communities, including low-income families, families of color, immigrant families, and families of children with special health care needs. With a deeper understanding of the economic, social, and systemic challenges influencing access to health care for low-income families and families of color, The Children's Partnership and HealthNet will leverage this partnership to advance equitable policy change that improves health and health equity.

Over the next twelve months, The Children's Partnership and HealthNet will host stakeholder convenings in Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, and the Central Valley designed to bring together families, educators, healthcare providers, health plans, and additional community leaders to identify potential telehealth models that would improve access to mental and behavioral health care for children in school-based settings. These convenings will inform the creation of policy recommendations and an advocacy agenda to advance community-driven telehealth solutions to improve child health and wellbeing.

Project Goals

The goals of this project include:

- Diverse stakeholders from marginalized communities are involved in the identification of barriers to accessing telehealth, and learn about currently available innovative solutions for mental and behavioral health care delivered via telehealth in community settings.
- The convenings inform the creation of a policy brief that outlines the findings of the three sessions, and includes tools and resources for stakeholders to use in integrating school-based telehealth models to improve access to mental and behavioral health care in their community.
- Policy recommendations and an advocacy agenda are developed in partnership with families, schools, providers, health plans, broadband experts and other stakeholders with a focus on expanding access for children in high-need areas.
- California state government and policymakers move towards wider adoption of telehealth, and greater financial investment in school-based telehealth models.

For more information about the project, please reach out to Gabriella Barbosa, gbarbosa@childrenspartnership.org, or Angela Vázquez, avazquez@childrenspartnership.org.