

# Tele-Physiatry: Improving Access and Quality to California's Medical Therapy Units

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**Project Description:** To address disparities in access and quality for children with special healthcare needs enrolled in CA's Medical Therapy Program. Children living in more than half of CA's 58 counties lack access to pediatric physiatrists for their mandated rehabilitative therapy services and are forced to either forgo services or travel long distances.

**Objective:** Implement a Tele-physiatry model of care to underserved school-based Medical Therapy Units while evaluating access, patient and parent experience of care, quality metrics and economic impact to the State.

**Solution:** Four county Medical Therapy Units adopted the school-based Tele-Physiatry model of care in addition to the in-person model of care. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the adoption of another model, Tele-Physiatry directly to the patient/parent home.

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## Results

- Data was collected on 171 MTU encounters at four schools. 65 children received care using the Tele-Physiatry model of care and 95 children received care in-person (standard of care).
- CAHPS experience of care ratings were similar between models of care and deemed non-inferior.
- Therapist perceptions of quality did not differ between the models of care (non-inferiority analysis).

## Parent Experience of Care



## Next Steps

- TWO NEW SITES that currently don't have MTUs.
- Planned analyses on parent experience; provider perception of quality; quality of care; and cost analyses.
- Evaluate the new model of care created by COVID: patient, therapists, physiatrist all on video (3-way).
- We have collected data on >80 encounters in this new model of care. We will enroll until 6/2021.
- Engaging with county and state MTP – MTUs - CCS and other stakeholders.

## Lessons Learned

- Goals have been partly achieved, albeit slower.
- COVID-19 impacted our new model of care but created a new model of tele-physiatry care.
- Enrolling the support and opinions of stakeholders was important to the success of this project.
- Clinical care doesn't necessarily (and maybe shouldn't) react to "my idea." Many people, county infrastructures need good reason to adopt – to change.
- Grant support (R01HS025714) allowing for project managers was critical to success.