

TELEHEALTH PEDIATRIC BEHAVIOR GUIDE

THERAPIST HANDOUT GUIDE



When providing pediatric telehealth services, you may have children who struggle with their behaviors, such as attention and compliancy. This guide will offer strategies to help address children's behaviors to provide them with motivation and reinforcement to engage in their session.



Motivational Strategies



- Ask the caregivers to be playful motivators.
 - Examples of how caregivers can be motivators are:
 - After a child completes a task, the caregiver can reward the child with cheering or provide an interaction that the child enjoys.
 - Caregivers can give an exaggerated surprised reaction to the child completing the task and celebrate by clapping or giving a high five.
- Use motivation token charts.
 - The child may be motivated to earn stars or stickers on their chart to access an item or activity.
 - When initially using the chart and gaining initial compliance, you may have to ask the child to attend to low-demanding directions. This will help the child to feel successful.
- Use big motivators, such as tablets and favorite activities with parents, as reinforcers that the child can earn after the therapy session.
 - The big motivators will be valuable reinforcements if the child receives them after completing a non-preferred or adult-directed activity.
 - Discuss and get permission from caregivers to use big motivators before using them as reinforcers in the session.
 - Discuss with caregivers to avoid having the child engage in big motivator activities before the session, as the child may struggle with transitioning to therapy.
- Use interactive digital therapy activities where the child can engage with the therapist during the session.
 - Interactive digital games and activities can offer ways to build rapport and encourage children to engage in activities.
- Have limited access to the child's favorite toys or activities.
 - Limited access can be used as a reward for following instructions or behaving appropriately in session.
 - Possibly save the favorite toys or activities for when you and the child need them the most as strong reinforcers.



Behavioral Strategies

- Use a first, then visual board.
 - A first, then visual board is a visual strategy that provides two images for the child to see what they have to do to get a reward or preferred activity.
 - It may be more impactful to the child to understand the first-then visual board when used in conjunction with first-then statements.
 - For example, “First, __. Then, __.” It is beneficial to use clear and concise statements.
- Use a visual schedule of the session.
 - A visual schedule is a sequence of images that shows the child what they are expected to do.
 - It may be helpful for the child to see that a task image has been completed, such as by placing a check mark or removing the image.
- Use a behavioral token economy chart
 - This tool helps a student to see their process and work for a delayed reinforcement or reward.
 - When creating a behavioral token economy chart, you should review the child’s goals, what motivates them, and the number of tokens the child needs to earn to receive a reward.
- Use directive phrasing when asking the child to do an activity.
 - Directive phrasing involves using clear and concise statements that makes it clear the activity is a not a choice.
 - For example, say to a child, “Put the shoe on.” Avoid saying, “Will you put on the shoe?”
- Tell the child what to do rather than what not to do.
 - It is more effectful to give clear, concise directions and tell the child what you expect.
 - For example, avoid saying “don’t throw the toy.” You may want to say “Nice hands.”
- Follow through with an adult directed instructed activity.
 - Ensure that you follow through with the instructions in session.
 - If the session is ending and you are unable to follow through with the instructions, ask the parent to follow through with the instruction after the session has ended for the child to learn that they still have to finish the task.
- Give the child some wait time to complete an adult-directed instructed activity.
 - Giving a child extra time to choose to complete a task allows them to process the instruction and demands of the activity.



For more information about telehealth, please refer to <https://www.aota.org/practice/practice-essentials/telehealth-resources>.

Disclaimer: The available information about telehealth OT is ever-evolving. Please verify all information before incorporating it into your interventions.

References

- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2018). Telehealth in occupational therapy. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2018.72S219>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process- Fourth edition. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(S2), 1-87. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>
- Brophy, P. D. (2017). Overview on the challenges and benefits of using telehealth tools in a pediatric population. *Advances in Chronic Kidney Disease*, 24(1), 17-21. <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.ackd.2016.12.003>
- Ferguson, J., Craig, E. A., & Dounavi, K. (2019). Telehealth as a model for providing behaviour analytic interventions to individuals with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorder*, 49, 582-616. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3724-5>
- Hsu, N., Monasterio, E., & Rolin, O. (2021). Telehealth in pediatric rehabilitation. *Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Clinics*, 32(2), 307-317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmr.2020.12.010>
- Lindgren, S., Wacker, D., Suess, A., Schieltz, K., Pelzel, K., Kopelman, T., Lee, J., Romani, P., & Waldron, D. (2016). Telehealth and autism: Treating challenging behavior at lower cost. *Pediatrics*, 137(2), 167-175. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-28510>
- Machalicek, W., Lequia, J., Pinkelman, S., Knowles, C., Raulston, T. J., Davis, T. N., & Alresheed, F. (2016). Behavioral telehealth consultation with families of children with autism spectrum disorder: Behavioral telehealth consultation. *Behavioral Interventions*, 31(3), <https://doi.org/10.1002/bin.1450>