

S-50 Telehealth Testimony – House committee on Health Care
4-4-17

Rep Bill Lippert - Chair

Jena Trombly, Director of Human Resources & Compliance for Clara Martin Center in Randolph VT.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify by phone.

On behalf of the Clara Martin Center & the DA / SSA system Vermont Care Partners, we strongly support Coverage of Telemedicine Services for use within the Designated Agency and Specialized Service Agency system of care. Use of Telemedicine improves access to needed services and to specialized services including at risk populations and those in geographically isolated regions.

Like many of the designated agencies, here at Clara Martin Center we have experienced a high turnover rate over the past several years, with particular difficulties at our Bradford office, where recruiting & retaining staff has been nearly impossible. Some staff are splitting schedules between offices an hour apart and managing caseloads of clients in several different office locations. We serve geographically challenging areas with little or no public transportation, and keeping connections with tough to reach adult, children and families is already very challenging. We have specialty services such as those within our Criminal Justice program where only a few staff are trained to treat certain populations. Those staff cannot always be on site, at multiple sites, to treat their clients.

With telemedicine we could perform group work by having one clinician in the room with the clients for a group and have a second group leader on the telehealth video equipment at the same time, at another location. This would allow the clients who have no ability to travel to another site to receive group services from a trained, professional while a second clinician (perhaps not as experienced as the leader) would be in the actual, physical room with the clients & also training to become a group leader.

Our Medical Directors splits his schedule between 3 offices each week. We do the best we can with what we have, but the option for reimbursable telemedicine services would strengthen our toolkit and enhance access to necessary treatment for the Vermonters we serve.

Telemedicine will help us serve clients in a timelier manner when they need us, which improves accessibility and strengthens the treatment relationship. We support this bill. Additionally, we have recommendations:

Recommendations: Expand the definition of "Provider" to include:

- Psychotherapists registered on the State of VT Roster for Non Licensed and Non Certified Psychotherapists – Licensed staff are difficult to recruit & retain
- Apprentice Addiction Professional (AAP) with or without a master's degree
- Alcohol and Drug Counselor (ADC) with or without a master's degree
- Allow billing to occur within an agency where the client is in one office, perhaps with a support worker or case manager, and their therapist or psychiatrist is in another location, but both providers work for the same agency.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take questions and submit my comments in writing.