



# Does Teletherapy Work? From Research to Real Life

June 20, 2024

**Presented by**

Dr. Mary Rice  
University of New Mexico



**Presented by**

Shannon Sloane  
GOAL Academy

# Introduction

# Agenda

Introduction 1:00 pm ET (10 minutes)

Presentation 1:10 pm ET (40 minutes)

Q&A/Discussion 1:50 pm ET (10 minutes)

# About eLuma

eLuma partners with K-12 schools to provide an end-to-end solution for mental health and special education services. eLuma helps school leaders build capacity by providing high-quality online therapists and providers, experience-led consultation, and a secure platform to effectively manage caseloads.

- Founded in 2011
- Comprised of 300+ dedicated team members
- Over 50,000 students served in 36 states



# Why are we here?

- Special education departments are particularly affected by K-12 **staffing shortages**. Forty-five percent of schools reported vacancies in special education roles, and **78% reported difficulty in hiring** special education staff.
- Of school personnel surveyed, 25% currently use a teletherapy provider and 63% consider themselves a future user.
- Well over [100 studies](#) from accredited universities and research organizations have concluded that online therapy is not only effective, but also produces similar, if not highly competitive outcomes compared to onsite therapy.



## The Issue

Educators are faced with **critical staffing and capacity challenges** due to increasing demand that's outpacing the supply of available therapists.

# What can teletherapy be used for?

- Assessments/Evaluations
- Speech-Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Counseling Sessions
- School Psychology Sessions
- And more!

# What issues does it solve?

- Addressing staffing constraints
- Improves accessibility of services
- Increased therapist options
- Reduced stigma for students
- Flexibility for scheduling



# What are the challenges?

- Technical difficulties
- Limited non-verbal cues
- Reduced sense of connection (for some!)

# Our Speakers



**Dr. Mary Rice** began her career as a junior high teacher, where she instructed students in English language arts, reading support, and TESOL classes. She has extensive experience in teacher education, having taught and supervised preservice teachers in a district-sponsored migrant summer school program for grades K-12.

Additionally, she has supported adjuncts and staff developers in teaching TESOL endorsement classes. Dr. Rice has also served as a research associate at the Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities at the University of Kansas.



**Shannon Sloane** is a seasoned educator and administrator in the field of special education, currently serving as the Director of Exceptional Student Services at GOAL High School in Colorado. With over two decades of experience in educational settings and 14 years as an administrator in online schools, Shannon has dedicated her career to enhancing the learning experiences of students with diverse needs.

Shannon currently resides in Castle Rock, where she continues to advocate for educational policies that support the inclusion and success of all students. Her commitment to special education is underscored by her hands-on approach and her deep understanding of the administrative challenges and opportunities in today's educational landscape.

# The Research



## Why Do Parents Like It?

- Scheduling Flexibility
- Their child prefers teletherapy
- They can be more involved in their child's therapy

# Why Do Providers Like It?

All major professional organizations have reviewed the research and found that teletherapy adheres to the professional standards and guidelines can be **as effective as in person therapy.**



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION



American  
Occupational Therapy  
Association



APTA

American Physical Therapy Association



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
School Psychologists

# What Do Parents Want to See?

Research shows parents  
(and students) are most  
satisfied when...

- Broadband is adequate
- The needed technology is provided
- Distractions are minimized
- Service hours work for their students schedule
- Hours are the same as on-site
- Providers are appropriately trained for virtual therapy



# School leaders can support quality teletherapy through ...

- Ensuring the **IEPs/504s are calibrated as team efforts** to determine the circumstances where teletherapy would be most successful.
- Working closely with providers to ensure that **teletherapists understand their roles and responsibilities** as well as what they are allowed to do under state laws.
- Guaranteeing or making arrangements for the **technological and other material resources** (e.g., objects for occupational therapy) needed for therapy.
- Supporting efforts to **communicate with parents** about teletherapy's potential.
- Considerations are made in **virtual school settings** for families with **multiple children** who need therapies.

# **Real Life Story**

# Goal High School Implementation Experience

- Challenges & Remedies
- Advice for other School Leaders & Service Providers
- Teletherapy Success Stories



## Challenges

- Lack of oversight
- Lack of organization
- Lack of communication
- Lack of integration

## Remedies

- Conducting screeners
- Requiring onboarding
- Providing training
- Creating RSP Manual
- Fostering connections
- Encouraging collaboration
- Overseeing caseload assignments
- Teaming with eLuma

# Suggestions for Success: Leaders Hiring Teletherapists

- Set **clear expectations** for them and from them, and hold them accountable
- Create and expect **consistent schedules** from them
- Integrate providers into the team and school
- Give them a **tour of the school**, even virtually
- Include them at the same level you do with in-person staff
- Ensure **functional tech and smooth access** to everything needed for their job
- Make **contingency plans** for the unexpected...and expect it!
- Remember they require work/life balance just as much as employees who work in person
- **VALUE THEM!**

# Suggestions for Success: Teletherapists Contracting with Schools

- Learn as much as you can about the school **before accepting** a post
- **Be honest** about your level of experience and be honest about your “why”
- Ensure you have reliable access to WiFi in your home office
- **Establish regular meetings** with the school leader / liaison
- Ask lots of questions
- Seek connection with other providers who are serving the school
- Offer the school leader your **observations, concerns, and suggestions** along the way
- **Integrate and collaborate** as much as possible
- Remember to take care of yourself and your needs



**Success Stories!**

“Thank you for believing in me and understanding how I operate. You’re always willing to help, and I appreciate how you’ve taken time over the past couple of years to get to know me.”

Card sent to teletherapy PT from a Graduating Senior

“The first person he called after ingesting a bottle of Tylenol PM in an attempt to kill himself was his eLuma school psychologist. The relationship his teletherapist had established with him absolutely saved this student’s life.”

Student receiving teletherapy mental health support

**Q & A**

# In a Recent Survey of 100 School Administrators, We Found That....

- Virtual therapy received **higher** average head-to-head satisfaction scores for **Convenience and Reliability**.
- Virtual therapy received very **similar** average satisfaction scores compared to on-site for the **Quality of Practitioners and Student Outcomes**.
- **81.5%** of respondents said Virtual therapy is **equal to or better than In-person**.



**Thank You**

**[www.eluma.com](http://www.eluma.com)**

**Follow us on all our Social Media  
@eLumaTherapy**