A Quick Guide to Providing Telechaplaincy Services

This sheet serves a brief resource for understanding and providing telehealth services either by telephone or video conferencing. Additional resources will be included for those who wish to receive more information about telehealth.

Is telehealth an option for chaplains?
- Telehealth services are **already employed by health care providers, including chaplains,** across the U.S. and abroad.
- Evidence indicates that **people receiving telechaplaincy are willing to use such services and find them highly acceptable.** Some prefer telehealth to in-person and have had their spiritual well-being enhanced through telehealth.
- Using telehealth **helps extend our capacity** to reach more people during a time of high need without potentially spreading COVID-19 or using limited PPE resources.

Systems for use
- Each hospital system will have its own preferred way to engage in telehealth services (e.g., Zoom, Facetime, Skype, Epic, etc.). **Speak with your hospital administrators about the preferred system that aligns with HIPPA regulations.**

How do I deliver telehealth care?
- Telehealth is very similar to bedside clinical care and chaplains can **use our core skills** to meet needs that we would do if at the bedside.
- **Create a flexible and casual script** to help you as you begin making calls; these should vary depending on who are reaching out to (patient, family, or staff).
  - ***[example]*** *Hi, my name is _____, I'm calling from the [Spiritual Care] department at _____hospital. This has been a stressful time and I/we just wanted to reach out to check in on how you are doing – is this a good time to talk?*
- **Be clear that you cannot provide medical information or advice.**
  - This is something we don't do in our typical roles as chaplains and carries into telechaplaincy.
- **Introduce yourself as from the spiritual care department rather than a chaplain.**
  - *People might be nervous when meeting a chaplain for the first time in-person or by telehealth. Keep it casual when stating your purpose.*
- **If possible, do chart checks prior to making a call.**
  - *You will not have the same visual cues you have in the room.* ***Do your background work to make sure the visit is most successful.*** *Is there anything that could limit or enhance your call?*
- **Use your voice to provide comfort and support.**
  - *You can convey presence over the phone. Pay attention to your tone, make noises that indicate you hear the person, nod if you are on video conferencing, and perhaps state if you are leaving time for silence.*
- **Set time boundaries**. Although we are meeting with people on the phone, be sure to communicate when you may need to end the call.
  - ***[example]*** *I have fifteen more minutes before I need to go – is there anything else you would like to talk about in that time?*
- **If you must leave a voicemail/message,** keep in HIPPA compliant (No private health information, etc.) and give a clear way for them to reach back out to you.

Lastly, be kind to yourself during these stressful days.
Take breaks, breathe, relax, and practice small doses of self-care daily.

Additional Resources:

- Association of Professional Chaplains, COVID-19 response materials
  - https://www.apchaplains.org/resources/covid-19-resources/
  - Multiple resources from different health systems and chaplaincy leaders
  - Recorded sessions and town halls available
- Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, COVID-19 response materials
  - https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/2020/04/chaplaincy-coronavirus
  - Scripts and resources available from multiple health systems
  - 1-hour panel presentation on providing virtual support during COVID-19 pandemic
  - Recorded sessions and town halls available
- National Association of Catholic Chaplains, COVID-19 response materials
  - https://www.nacc.org/resources/coronavirus-resources/
  - Includes hospital protocols, information sacraments, prayers
  - Recorded sessions and town halls available
- Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains, COVID-19 response materials
  - http://jewishchaplain.net
  - Includes support resources for chaplains
- Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, COVID-19 response materials
  - https://www.acpe.edu/ACPE/News/Stories/2020/COVID19ResponseandAccreditation.aspx
- MGH Psychiatry Academy, Providing palliative care support via telehealth
  - https://vimeo.com/267407042/56db53d20f