

Staffing Overview

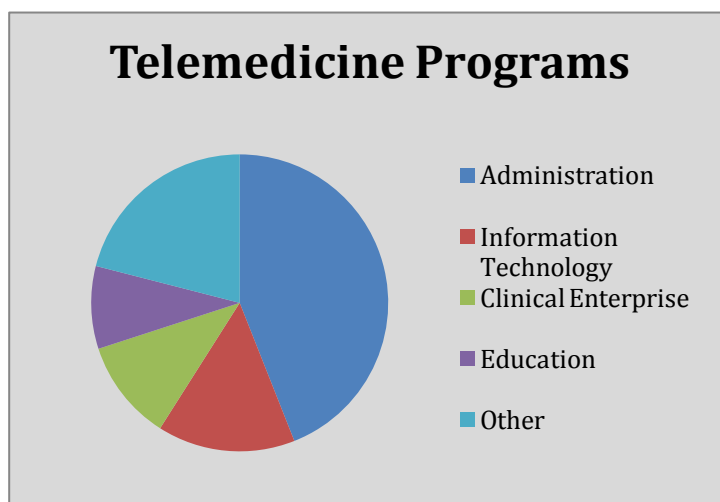
One of the most crucial components of a successful telemedicine program is having a staff that is knowledgeable and capable of carrying out a variety of tasks associated with the operation of a telemedicine program. Telemedicine program staff at both the provider and patient site should work together to ensure smooth and efficient delivery of services.

Staffing needs should be discussed simultaneously with the project development conversations, and well before any equipment purchases. The equipment which is ultimately purchased could be the newest and the most expensive on the market today. However, if it doesn't get used, it is no better than the 10-year old models out there sitting in some people's closets. If it doesn't get used, then it is simply a dust collector and a waste of budgeted dollars.

A common question posed by many programs is in regards to where the telemedicine program should officially be located within the structure of your organization. In May of 2007, a survey was conducted by Rob Sprang through the University of Kentucky, Kentucky Telecare telemedicine program. This survey asked established telemedicine programs across the country a few questions about the structure and staffing of their programs. When asked about the reporting structure of their telemedicine program, the responses demonstrated that there

is not just one method used when establishing telemedicine programs, but each facility had to identify a "best fit" for their program and organization. The majority of the responses indicated that the telemedicine program was located within an administration-level department (44%). The next three departments listed were fairly even (Information Technology – 15%; Clinical Enterprise – 11%; and Education – 9%). The rest of the programs (21%) were located in yet other departments.

Additionally, the survey asked about the size of the telemedicine department as far as number of staff involved. This response also varied greatly. There was really no one answer that was identified as "the best practice". Responses varied from between 1-2 FTEs to over 9. Again, it is



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important to design the program structure to match the needs and skills of your program and organization.

While program structure may vary significantly, the core functions and responsibilities of those same programs are often very similar. It is important to understand the skills and capabilities staff need in order to move the program forward successfully.

Staffing Suggestions

Here is an example of some of the staffing roles recommended: (keep in mind, one person can serve multiple roles)

Project/Program Manager – guides the telehealth team and handles the administrative aspects surrounding pre- and post-implementation (sometimes they are different people pre vs. post) as well as serving as primary advocate within the organization.

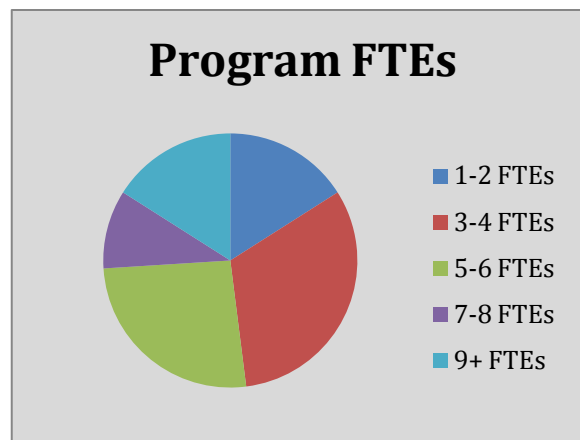
Clinical Coordinator – leads all aspects of the clinical services provided including staff/provider training, service coordination, and process development; and should be filled by someone with a level of clinical experience.

Clinical Champion/Director – serves as liaison with the organization’s medical staff and provides guidance and encouragement in service development/provision and provider recruitment.

Site Coordinator (remote site) – serves as the main point of contact at the remote location and as the information distribution center for “all things telehealth”

Technology Coordinator – serves as the primary contact for equipment issues (connectivity issues, troubleshooting, etc.) and must understand the need for “immediate response” when clinical services are provided.

Nurse Presenter – serves at the remote site and is often in the room assisting the patient and interacts with the provider at a distance, serving as their “eyes and ears”.



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It is important to understand that it would be rare indeed for one telemedicine program to look exactly like another one. Every telemedicine program will have different needs and budgets. Additionally, each program has people with different skills, strengths and interests. While staffing is often viewed as one of the most costly components of the program development and implementation, but it is the most critical as it is those individuals involved that will likely determine the success of the program.