



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Andy Beshear, Governor

Eric Friedlander, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Two national grants provide telehealth for special needs children in Kentucky**

*Will have a positive impact on state's most vulnerable children*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (Nov. 19, 2020) – Kentucky’s Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN) has received two national grants to bolster telehealth services. One grant for \$100,000 comes from the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), while the other is a minigrant for \$7,500 from Family Voices.

“The delivery of health care has evolved throughout the course of this pandemic – it has expanded beyond the walls of a medical facility,” said Gov. Beshear.

“Telehealth is an example of the expanded delivery of care which allows Kentuckians to access health care services from the comfort of their home, limiting the risk of exposure to COVID-19.”

“Health care is a basic human right and we’re committed to ensuring all Kentuckian’s have access,” said the Governor.

“Telehealth has proven to be beneficial for so many children with special needs, but access is not as simple as it may seem,” said Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, which houses OCSHCN. “These grants

will help us provide education on how to use telehealth, plus create a lending library of technology, such as tablets and MiFi-type devices.”

This will help bring telehealth to hundreds of special needs children who’ve not had access before, Friedlander said.

OCSHCN research shows the greatest barriers to telehealth are equipment, such as computers and connectivity.

“Many portions of Kentucky still don’t have internet access,” noted Ivanora Alexander, executive director of OCSHCN. Because of this, efforts will focus primarily on remote portions of eastern Kentucky.

“This will clearly have a positive impact on some of the most vulnerable children in rural Kentucky,” Alexander added.

The technology lending library will provide the equipment when needed, which will be delivered to family homes and then returned. To incentivize the use of the equipment as well as its return, participating families will be given a gift card upon the return of equipment plus be asked to take a survey.

OCSHCN Medical Director Patricia Purcell, MD, FAAP pointed out that more than 90 percent of parents who have participated in telehealth services have given it high approval ratings. Educating families with special needs children on how to get the most out of telehealth visits is a significant benefit the grants provide.

“With telehealth, a parent can be there while the child is evaluated, then have online one-on-one time with the physician to talk through the diagnosis and therapies while the child can retreat to another room,” she said. “Telehealth is often less distracting with less pressure on everyone.”

These grants are also timely because COVID-19 has made telehealth services more important than ever. A trip to a doctor’s office involves exposing the child and parent to others. Plus, it’s common for families to bring along the patient’s siblings. During this pandemic, telehealth eliminates the risk associated with such in-person visits.

There are differences between the two grants aside from the amounts. The AMCHP grant is for OCSHCN-approved families and will help provide education

services as well as funding for the technology lending library. The Family Voices grant helps the OCSHCN's Family to Family Health Information Center, also known as F2F. It can be used for telehealth education for any Kentucky family.

The OCSHCN operates under the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Dr. Purcell stresses that the grants support the OCSHCN's mission, which is to enhance the quality of life for Kentucky's children with special health care needs through quality service, leadership, advocacy, education and collaboration. OCSHCN's priorities are to:

- Ensure access to care for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN)
- Ensure families have adequate insurance
- Ensure successful transition of CYSHCN from pediatric to adult providers
- Utilize data in decision making.

The Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs is a national resource, partner and advocate for state public health leaders and others working to improve the health of women, children, youth and families, including those with special health care needs.

Family Voices is a national family-led organization of families and friends of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and disabilities.

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*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and health care programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services; the Department for Community Based Services; the Department for Public Health; the Department for Aging and Independent Living; and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*