



USC University of
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Three Years of Telehealth

INCREDIBLE YEARS GROUPS AT CHLA IN THE COVID ERA

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The COVID Timeline in California

- March 2020 - California implements quarantine
 - Nonessential workers are required to stay home
 - Public masking is mandated; most indoor public venues are restricted or closed
 - Schools close; remote learning is implemented
 - Children are isolated from most peers
 - Children are exposed to pandemic stress at home
 - Family economic hardship
 - Confronted with illness and death
 - Isolated from support networks



CHLA During COVID

- Like all hospitals, Children's Hospital Los Angeles remains open, but implements significant restrictions
 - At the peak of the pandemic restrictions, most ambulatory care facilities were transitioned to telehealth
 - Most behavioral health appointments were conducted online, beginning in March 2020
 - Social distancing requirements significantly limited the capacity to conduct group therapy



Incredible Years at CHLA During COVID



- Incredible Years groups were transitioned to telehealth
 - Groups were mid-cycle when quarantine restrictions were implemented
 - Group leaders began making telehealth contact with group members within two weeks after the quarantine began
 - Full telehealth groups began shortly thereafter, as the long duration of the pandemic became clear

- December 2020: COVID Vaccines are introduced
- March 2021: U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declares youth mental health crisis in the U.S.
- April 2021: LAUSD partially reopens (half days of in person school with half-capacity classrooms
 - Fall 2021: Full day, full classroom schools reopen
 - Mandatory masking and weekly testing
- February 2022: Indoor masking ended
- March 2023: COVID Emergency Declaration Ends

- CHLA is a hospital and must follow more stringent COVID requirements
 - Social distancing requirements necessitated that IY groups remain online, even after children returned to school and most restrictions were lifted
- June 2023: CHLA has its first full, in person IY trainings
- September 2023: CHLA resumes in person IY parent and child groups

- The pandemic emergency declaration may be lifted, but the impact continues
 - Elevated rates of anxiety and depression among children
 - 24% increase in emergency room visits for youth 5-11
 - Lack of mental health access is a challenge for all youth, but most striking for those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds
 - (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Future increases in COVID (or other pandemics) might necessitate a return to telehealth services
- Incredible Years remains an ideal tool to address the pandemic impact, now and in the future

Mood-Enhancing Intermediary Slide





THREE YEARS OF INCREDIBLE YEARS BY TELEHEALTH: LESSONS LEARNED

Virtual Delivery Context at CHLA

- March 2020 - August 2023: all Incredible Years groups (child and parent) are delivered virtually
- We offer approximately 8-10 groups a "round"; two rounds each year (Fall/ Spring)
 - 5 Parent Groups
 - 2 Preschool (Eng & Span)
 - 2 School Age (Eng & Span)
 - 1 Attentive Parenting
 - 4 Child Groups
- Each year 16-20 newly trained group leaders are paired with more experienced/ certified group leaders to implement a parent group or a child group during one of two rounds

One hour group:

- 10 minutes 'coached' play
- Songs and agenda
- 20 minutes circle time (new learning, puppet demos, videos, etc.)
- Small group activities
- Points, complement circle, show and tell

Sample Agenda Parent Group

General Guidelines for Telehealth IY Sessions (60-90 min)

- Check-In (15-30)
- New Content (20-30)
 - 1-2 vignettes
 - Practice or Buzz
 - 1-2 vignettes
 - Practice or Buzz
- Closing

**The
Incredible
Years®**

Hot Tips for IY Group Leaders Delivering
the Incredible Years Video Parent Programs via On-Line Tele-Sessions

Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

Developer of Incredible Years® Programs





BENEFITS

Benefit 1: CONNECTION!

DINOSAUR SCHOOL

- Especially during quarantine, Dinosaur School offered children a social outlet to build their social skills.
- They were very engaged and connected to their groups!

PARENT GROUPS

- Anecdote to loneliness and isolation
- Supported parents to carve out time for themselves with other adults
- Provided critical connection and support to isolated parents

Benefit 2: COACHING CONNECTION

DINOSAUR SCHOOL

- Parents were asked to support their children during the groups. This allowed them exposure to the skills they were learning in parent groups (praise, ignore, coaching, etc.).

PARENT GROUPS

- Ability to engage children in practices of parenting skills

- Increased access to program through reduced logistical barriers:
 - Reduced need to travel, time to engage, etc.
- Children were experts in technology and taught parents
- Reduced barriers for staff facilitators who were also caring for children and/or family members
- We learned that we could "do" IY on-line!



Benefits Brainstorm



BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

- Groups were only one hour due to children's limited attention so the total dosage was lower. A full group would be 36+ hours of Small Group Dina, but we were closer to 20.
- Children tended to interact most easily with group leaders and puppets. It took a lot of deliberate encouragement to have them interact with one another and start building connections.
- Fewer coached play opportunities.
- Distractions! Children sometimes wandered away, played with toys, were looking elsewhere, or weren't in quiet settings (i.e. their car, in rooms with others).

Challenges - Parent Groups

- Challenges in co-facilitating with first time group leaders
 - Locating materials needed to prepare
- Technology
 - Many parents used cell phones to participate

- What challenges did you/ do you face with delivery of virtual Incredible Years groups?



STRATEGIES: TAPPING IN TO THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Recommended Skills and Techniques for Child Group

- Puppets work great via telehealth - use liberally.
- Building group cohesion takes time - use breakout rooms, identify similar interests, frequent complement circles, praise spontaneous interactions.
- Frequent movement breaks - songs, yoga, scavenger hunts.
- Screen sharing tended to be less engaging, so more use of the puppet or role plays to practice behavior.

Recommended Skills and Techniques for Parent Groups

- Regular use of breakout rooms for connection
 - Participants ALWAYS* returned smiling and/or laughing
- Initial routine adaptation (breakouts + engagement)
- Plan and practice
- Choose vignettes accordingly
 - Shorter/ more direct examples of concept seemed to work better
 - Pause more frequently to engage/ check for understanding

BUZZ

Please share 1-2 concrete strategies that you used to address one or more of the challenges identified.

- Check-In Ideas
 - Use stress-focused questions (check in on self-care via diet, exercise, relationships)
 - Send participants to breakout rooms with a prompt to discuss as they arrive to check-in and connect with one another. While participants check-in with one another reach out to missing attendees via phone.
- More reminders/ structure needed for engagement
 - Send auto reminders day before & morning of group
- Integrating stress management conversations with parents/ teachers
- Modeled “Wiggle Breaks” via giving options

- **Setting the Space**
 - Importance of clarity around purpose of group space
 - Including discussion of privacy/ identifying private location
 - What's ok/ what's not ok
 - Review and modification of group norms
 - Engage participants in collaborative discussions to set space
 - Provide reminders of how to organize their space/ things to consider
- **Evaluations**
 - Use online systems to collect evaluations
- **Disseminating Materials & Rewards**
 - Send
 - Do a drop off/ home visit

- **Technology Use**
 - Use technology to track ideas real time (google docs, copy chat, etc)
 - Provide access to technology or help access
 - Partner with schools & libraries
 - Limit to one hour in evenings or during lunch time
- **Facilitate session material 2x**
- **Smaller groups**
- Increase coaching between virtual sessions
- Coach children with parents present

Thank You!

- YouTube: I Spy videos, Cosmic Kids Yoga
- IY Pandemic videos and Invest In Kids videos.
- Build Your Own Spinning Wheel
- Build a Treehouse (teamwork)
- Multiple Group Leader logins - a second camera could be used as a closeup of Wally's desk to see what he is doing (drawing, building, problems, etc.)