Roots Telehealth Support & Distribution Program

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Background/Need

As with many safety-net organisations, we venture into unfamiliar territory dedicated to building a sustainable and equitable virtual care experience for all. In response to the pandemic, Roots Community Health Center (Roots) rapidly transformed to offer telehealth-based services and optimized existing telecommunication infrastructure for capabilities across all of their clinical sites. Additionally, statewide surveying of low income and people of color showed that telehealth was an essential source of care during the pandemic and an option patients would like to have post-pandemic. Moreover, once the national emergency was declared many payers were reimbursing audio-only and video visits at the same rate as in-person visits. As parity for reimbursement of audio-only telehealth visit diminishes, Roots recognized the following barriers in utilizing video visit services: 1) Organizational Capacity 2) Devices and Internet Access 3) Digital Literacy. As the public health emergency ends and ambulatory visits resume, we need to prepare for the reality that audio-only visits aren't here to stay.

Why Telehealth:
- Cost and time savings
- Decreased travel
- Timely access to care
- Reducing time off from work.
- Opportunity to reach patients providers have never been able to reach before
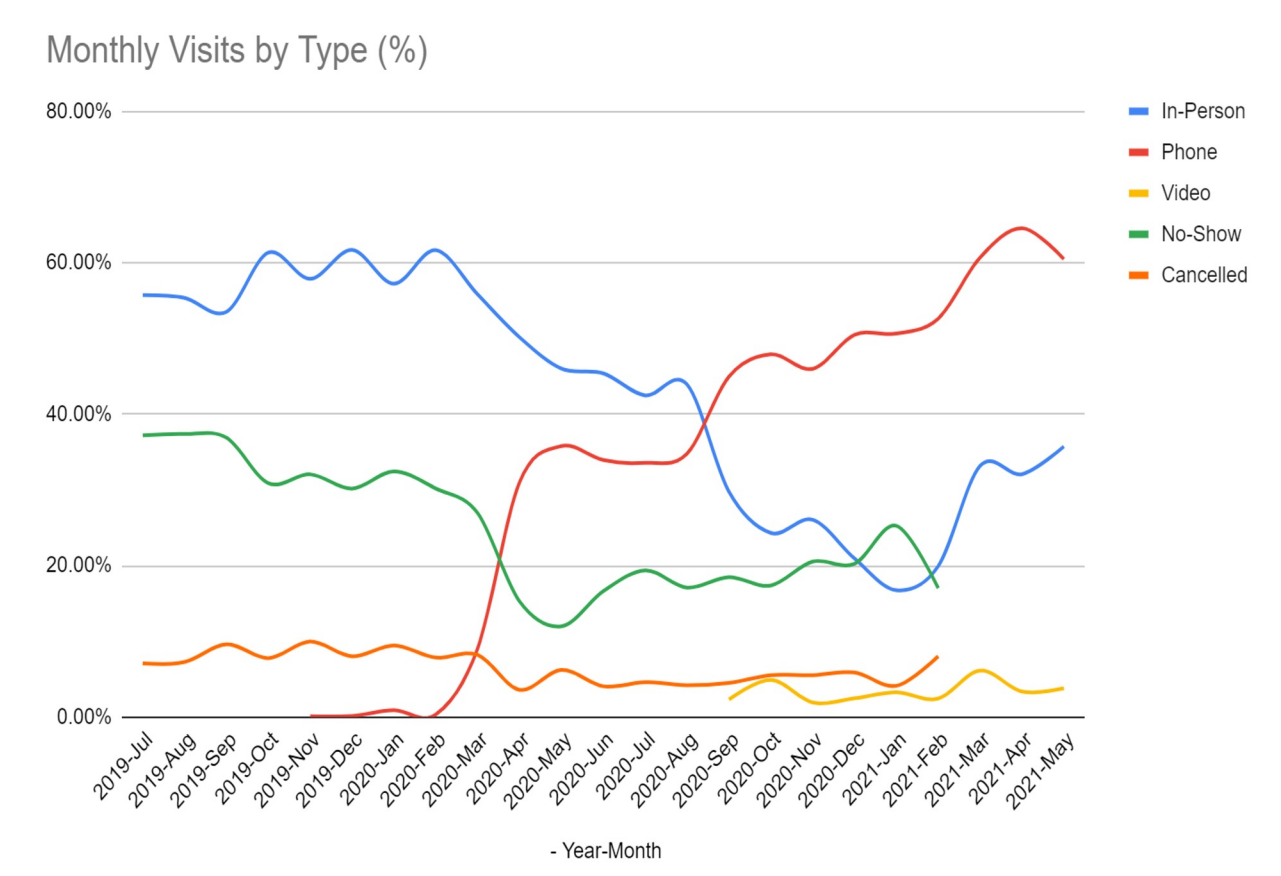
Monthly Visits by Type (%)

Figure 1: Telehealth Use at Roots

Community Partner

Roots is a non-profit organization focused on uplifting those impacted by systemic inequities, racism, and poverty through advocacy, robust community centered integration of medical and behavioral care, social services, work enterprises, health navigation, and street outreach medical services. Roots is committed to engaging and empowering all members of our community to counter the effects of multi-generational poverty, trauma, incarceration, chronic stress and longstanding lack of health access stemming from structural racism.

Project Description

Create and deliver a robust telehealth support program providing devices and digital literacy training addressing the needs and challenges of patients to provide an equitable and high-quality virtual care experience for historically

Outcomes

We worked collaboratively with Root's Staff to create the following:
- Screening processes to identify patients with barriers to accessing telehealth services such as limited digital literacy, lack of access to devices and/or lack of access to the internet
- Partnerships with programs that align with Roots Community Health Center goals and values to purchase quality refurbished devices for patients. We were able to to accrue 25 devices (20 laptops and 5 iPads for our pilot launch of the program)
- A workflow to store, manage and distribute devices to patients in need of devices, internet access or digital literacy training
- Technology guides and workflows for phone-based and in person digital literacy trainings
- Resource guides to support community members in need of low-cost, reliable internet access at home

ROOTS community health center — AFFORDABLE INTERNET ACCESS OPTIONS
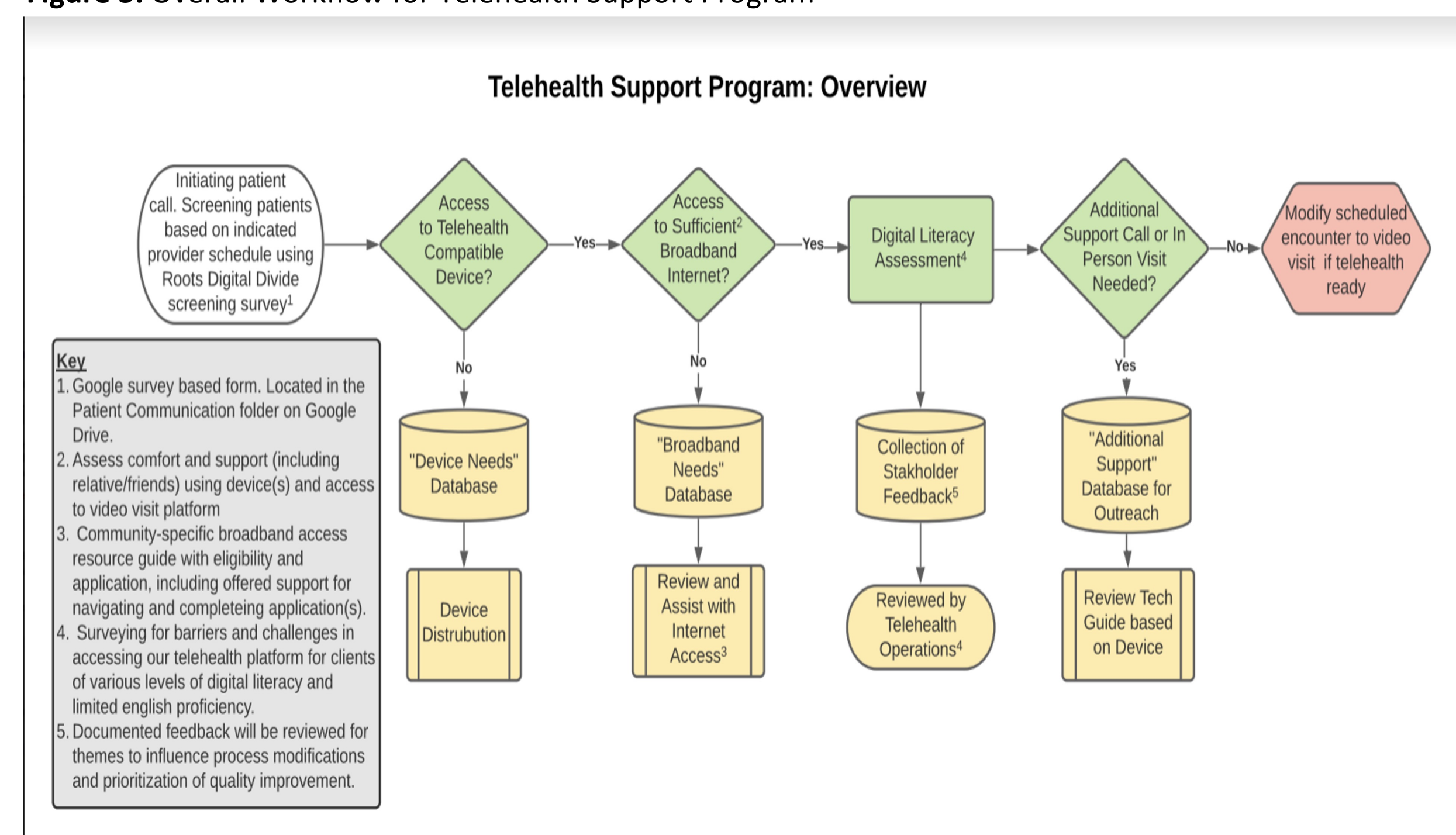
1. **Access from AT&T Program** - Internet service for $10/mo. or less based on the maximum speed available at your address up to 25Mbps.
2. **Emergency Broadband Benefit Program** - Up to $50/month discount on Internet service. One-time discount of up to $100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of $10-50).
3. **Internet Essentials from Comcast** - First two months free (if you apply before 12/31/21), then $9.95 per month plus tax.
4. **Internet First from Wave** - Up to 50 Mbps for only $9.95; varies depending on speed .
5. **Cox Connect2Compete** - Cox helps provide low-cost, home internet with wifi at $9.95/month.
6. **Everyone On** - A search engine that helps pair you with the best offers for your situation. Additionally, helps connect you with locations that have Digital Literacy Training Programs.

Find the resources at this website
https://linktr.ee/affordablewifi
or scan the QR code:

Facebook: RootsEmpowers   Instagram: RootsEmpowers   Twitter: RootsEmpowers

Figure 2: Resource Guide for Internet Access

Figure 3: Overall Workflow for Telehealth Support Program

Telehealth Support Program: Overview

Initiating patient call. Screening patients based on indicated provider schedule using Roots Digital Divide screening survey[1] → Access to Telehealth Compatible Device? → Yes → Access to Sufficient[2] Broadband Internet? → Yes → Digital Literacy Assessment[4] → Additional Support Call or In Person Visit Needed? → No → Modify scheduled encounter to video visit if telehealth ready

Access to Telehealth Compatible Device? → No → "Device Needs" Database → Device Distribution

Access to Sufficient Broadband Internet? → No → "Broadband Needs" Database → Review and Assist with Internet Access[3]

Digital Literacy Assessment → Collection of Stakeholder Feedback[5] → Reviewed by Telehealth Operations[4]

Additional Support Call or In Person Visit Needed? → Yes → "Additional Support" Database for Outreach → Review Tech Guide based on Device

Key
1. Google survey based form. Located in the Patient Communication folder on Google Drive.
2. Assess comfort and support (including relative/friends) using device(s) and access to video visit platform
3. Community-specific broadband access resource guide with eligibility and application, including offered support for navigating and completing application(s).
4. Surveying for barriers and challenges in accessing our telehealth platform for clients of various levels of digital literacy and limited english proficiency.
5. Documented feedback will be reviewed for themes to influence process modifications and prioritization of quality improvement.

Lessons Learned

There were many programmatic challenges in crafting this program to be as patient-friendly as possible. We recognized early on that patient input and feedback needed to be centralized in all stages of development and implementation. Furthermore, we recognized that this feedback should be collected in a formal, permanent manner with compensation for patient input. Additionally, we recognized that additional support staff was needed to sustain this program. As such, we recruited volunteers from both Stanford and UC Berkeley to aid in development and long-term implementation.

Future Directions

- The program will launch utilizing both volunteers and Root's staff to screen by phone for current patients in need of devices, internet access or digital literacy training.
- In recognition that patient voice and input is essential in all stages of program development, Roots launched a Telehealth Patient Advisory Council (TPAC). So far, in these meetings we identified the need for:
  - digital literacy and cybersecurity trainings
  - a simplified process to access resources TPAC will continue to meet and provide feedback on program structure and workflow.
- We have partnered with non-profit organization EveryoneOn who has donated laptops to distribute to patients and who will offer a weekly digital literacy class for Roots' Patients

Acknowledgments