



Newsletter

December 2022

Greetings and Welcome to the first issue of the TAO newsletter!

TAO decided to start a monthly newsletter to share with you what is happening with telehealth and digital health both in Oregon and throughout the US. We will continue to use the listserv for 'breaking news' and will offer our revamped website as a resource for all things telehealth including policy, program resources, broadband activity, and upcoming events and webinars. If you like the newsletter share it with other you think would be interested.

What's Happening with TAO?

TAO has been a non-profit since 2005 as an advocate and facilitator for telehealth in Oregon. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have had to rethink everything about the organization from how we are organized, how we disseminate information, and how we provide value to the healthcare community in Oregon. Our Board is working hard to evaluate and define our role, and we will provide you with more information as we work through our options. In the meantime, we hope you will enjoy this monthly newsletter and the new look of our [website](#).

Meet Stepha!

During the 2022 Oregon Legislative Session HB 4092 was passed to better enable the newly created Oregon Broadband Office to successfully prepare for and manage the federal broadband funding designated for Oregon. Included in that bill was a restructuring of the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council. The Council is made up of 13 members whose mission is to encourage coordination and collaboration between organizations and economic sectors to leverage the development and utilization of broadband for education, workforce development, and telehealth. Telehealth was not originally represented, but TAO fought hard during the session to make sure it was included.

Steph Dragoon emerged as the ideal candidate to fill the position and was approved by the Governor. She is working diligently to represent telehealth at the Council table.



Stepha Dragoon (she/they) has over a decade of experience leading community impact initiatives across the United States. They recently obtained dual master's degrees in social work and public affairs from the University of Texas at Austin. Stepha has experience in social impact consulting, health equity initiatives, program evaluation, academic research, and policy development. Stepha manages the Office of Rural Health programs related to population health, telehealth, and healthy aging.

You can contact Stepha by emailing her at dragon@ohsu.edu

COVID PHE Extended

The federal government will extend the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration until at least April. HHS had officially extended the PHE until January 13, 2023. Lacking the 60-day notice before the end of the PHE HHS promised to give providers, the PHE will likely not end until April. This is important because the PHE keeps the waivers regarding telehealth coverage in place until 151 days after the end of the PHE. The extension will allow Congress and CMS to continue considering how to best manage the provisions in the waivers – whether to extend them permanently, let them expire, or modify the waivers based on data gathered during the PHE. There are many pieces of telehealth legislation pending in Congress. No single bill will likely pass. A more likely scenario is that the provisions in some of the bills that were introduced will be included in a larger bill such as a budget/funding package.

In Remembrance



Many in Oregon's telehealth community have lost a dear friend and colleague. On October 3, Susie Fisher left us and her fight with pancreatic cancer

(she always said she was just someone living with pancreatic cancer) behind on her way to her next adventure. Susie was leader to establish telehealth in Oregon and worked closely to help establish the telestroke network. She led Providence Oregon in the development of its telehealth program. Susie's bright smile and ready wit made her a welcome asset as we struggled to grow Oregon's telehealth programs. She was an advocate, a mediator and a friend. The family will hold an "after party" at her request, next spring. We will send more details as we know them.

Check out the TAO Website!

TAO invites you to check out our revamped [website](#). We are working hard to make the website easier to use, more attractive and filled with updated and useful information. This is a work in progress, and we invite you to offer your thoughts about what you find useful and what other information you would like to see using the 'Contact Us' page on the website.

Happy Holidays!!