



What has been done to increase the use of telemedicine during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- CMS is expanding this benefit on a temporary and emergency basis under the 1135 waiver authority and Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act. CMS released a [fact sheet](#) and set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) regarding provision and billing for telemedicine services during the COVID-19 outbreak. CMS has also released a telemedicine toolkit that provides additional [guidance](#) and details. The temporary changes significantly expand the methods, locations, and circumstances under which telemedicine can be billed for Medicare enrollees, including removal of the current geographic restrictions.
- According to CMS [COVID FAQs](#), the CMS waiver does not authorize Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) to furnish telehealth services as distant site health care providers under Medicare because that is outside the scope of an 1135 waiver. In a March 5, 2018, [Provider Bulletin](#), MO HealthNet indicated RHCs may bill using either their RHC provider number or their non-RHC provider number when operating as a distant site. Once the President signs the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) into law, RHCs will have more flexibility for reimbursement of telehealth services. Questions regarding this conflict in guidance may be directed to Andrew Wheeler or Meghan Henderson.
- Hospitals may bill MO HealthNet a [facility fee](#) for distant site services provided in their facilities, which must be reported on the UB04 claim form with the procedure code, GT modifier and zero billed charges. The billed charges for the facility fee must be billed on a separate line of the claim. The physician providing the service still will bill for their distant site services on the medical claim form. MO HealthNet will also pay for teledentistry services during the COVID-19 emergency. Additional details are [available](#) in the Hot Tips blog.

- Third-party payors have implemented changes to telehealth services policies.

- United Healthcare [site](#)
- Anthem [site](#)

What are the expectations to maintain HIPAA and patient privacy?

- The Office of Civil Rights [has published notification](#) that it will exercise its enforcement discretion and will not impose penalties for noncompliance with the regulatory requirements under the HIPAA Rules against covered health care providers in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. OCR [published FAQs](#) addressing telehealth and HIPAA during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency.

What options exist for telemedicine services to treat COVID-19 patients and patients at high risk for infection?

- Telemedicine services, which include telehealth, e-visits and virtual check-ins, should be utilized as much as possible to optimize patient health status, maintain social distancing and prevent infection spread.
- A verbal consent from the patient does need to be obtained and documented in the medical record for telehealth services, as well as steps taken to ensure the patient and/or family has education and knowledge of how to access applicable telehealth services.
- It is highly recommended that all primary care providers review their patient panels, prioritize patients with chronic disease or immunocompromised diagnoses, and offer telehealth services in lieu of in-person clinic visits. This will serve to optimize the patient's condition, provide education and conserve hospital-based resources while preventing the spread of COVID-19.



- Patients receiving care for substance use disorders are eligible for telehealth services. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) issued [guidance](#) for this patient population.
- The Mid-America MHTTC, Mountain Plains MHTTC and Mid-America ATTC is offering Telehealth Learning and Consultation (TLC) Tuesdays, an online series for providers and staff new to or unfamiliar with telehealth to ask questions and hear practical advice. Recordings of the 20-minute presentations will be posted on the [telehealth web page](#) as they become available.
 - [March 31: Telehealth Basics](#)
 - [April 7: Telehealth Billing](#)
 - [April 14: Telehealth Tools](#)
 - [April 21: Telehealth with Children and Adolescents](#)
 - [April 28: Telehealth Troubleshooting](#)

Missouri Telehealth Network and Show-Me ECHO, in partnership with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and MHA, are supporting a COVID-19 ECHO to provide up-to-date information and support for health care stakeholders across Missouri. A multidisciplinary expert team led by Director Randall Williams, MD, will share the latest developments, answer questions, and discuss management of patient cases presented by participants. The COVID-19 ECHO will meet via Zoom videoconferencing every Monday from noon to 1 p.m. [Click here](#) to download ECHO flyer. Information in this FAQ is subject to change and will be added to as more guidance is made available.

The Missouri Rural Health Association announced a partnership with Avera eCARE® to help rural hospitals implement tele-emergency and tele-hospitalist services. Avera eCARE Hospitalists work in conjunction with local facility medical staff to provide high-quality care and management of complex medical and surgical patients age 18 years and older. eCARE Hospitalists step in to provide admission support/consultation, inpatient consultations, and cross cover services at the request of the bedside physician, practitioner, or nurse.

A total of five hospitals will be selected for this three-year program to implement either tele-emergency or tele-hospitalist. Selection criteria include need, program implementation capacity and sustainability. Selected hospitals have a financial stake in program implementation, with the smallest expenditure in year one (25%), and increasing expenditures over years two (50%) and three (75%). For more information, contact MRHA Executive Director Melissa VanDyne at 573.645.8243, or email melissa@morha.org.

Telehealth is playing a key role in expanding access to patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Missouri Telehealth Network, its Show-Me ECHO program and their state and national partners are committed to helping providers during this particularly challenging time. In partnership with MOREnet, MTN is offering complimentary Zoom licenses to local public health agencies, rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers and critical access hospitals responding to COVID-19. Licenses are encrypted and with proper protocols can be used for direct patient care, patient education, patient check-ins and more. [Click here](#) for information and to access a Zoom license for telehealth provision.

