

# TELEHEALTH:

## Expanding access to care



Telehealth has played a vital role in helping individuals maintain continuity of care, preserving critical healthcare resources and reducing the potential spread of illness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use of telehealth has grown during the last decade despite the many system and policy barriers to its wider adoption. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, federal and state policymakers took unprecedented actions and made temporary policy changes that drastically accelerated telehealth utilization and changed how care is delivered. To ensure individuals have access to telehealth benefits, governing bodies need to take action.

### Congress should:

- **LIFT MEDICARE RESTRICTIONS** in originating sites and eligible geographies, services and providers
- **PASS THE 2019 CONNECT FOR HEALTH ACT** to allow CMS to waive certain Medicare restrictions and expand access to telehealth through high-quality care and alternative payment models
- **MAINTAIN THE FLEXIBILITY** enacted in the CARES Act for commercial insurers to cover telehealth pre-deductible in high-deductible health plans

### Certain Federal regulatory flexibilities should be made permanent:

- **ALLOW TELEHEALTH AND AUDIO-ONLY VISIT DIAGNOSES** to be included in risk adjustment calculations for Medicare Advantage (MA), Medicaid, and individual and small group market plans
- **ADD ELIGIBLE TELEHEALTH SERVICES** to the Medicare Telehealth Service list and modify the need for existing doctor-patient relationships
- **INCREASE ACCESS** to underserved areas by allowing Medicare providers to practice across state lines
- **ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF TELEHEALTH** by not mandating payment parity between virtual and in-person visits
- **ALLOW HEALTH INSURERS TO MAINTAIN NEWLY ADDED BENEFITS** or cost-sharing changes that have expanded telehealth and other remote care services

### States should provide flexibility:


- **ENSURE THE CONTINUED AFFORDABILITY** of telehealth services by not mandating or expanding payment parity between virtual and in-person visits
- **EXPAND THE TYPES OF PROVIDERS** and services eligible for telehealth
- **EXPAND ELIGIBILITY** based on patient location or geography
- **MAINTAIN UTILIZATION** management protocols
- **ALLOW PROVIDERS** licensed in other states to practice across state lines

**MORE THAN 9 MILLION**  
**MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES**  
**USED TELEHEALTH SERVICES BETWEEN**  
**MARCH & MAY, 2020**



**TELEHEALTH CLAIMS**  
**INCREASED**  
**4,300%**  
**IN MARCH 2020**



**MORE**   
**THAN 76%**  
**OF PEOPLE ARE NOW**  
**INTERESTED IN TELEHEALTH**  
 (COMPARED TO 11% IN 2019)\*  
\*McKinsey survey respondents