

THE PROMISE OF TELEHEALTH

The Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP) supports expanded access to and adoption of telehealth, including important care delivery flexibilities that empower consumers and doctors to use virtual care broadly.

ACHP supports bipartisan efforts to ensure the full promise of telehealth to promote health equity, improve patient access and drive value in the health care system.

Improving and Expanding Access to Care

It is imperative that Congress protect recent gains in telehealth and ensure continued access to the coverage and care Americans need. Virtual care has been vital in reaching underserved, rural and at-risk populations, especially during the pandemic; maintaining chronic care management; delivering mental health services; and keeping consumers out of in-patient settings that may pose a risk of contracting COVID-19.

Current law prevents telehealth from reaching its full potential to expand patient access and improve health outcomes for diverse and underrepresented communities. Rural, frontier, minority, economically depressed and other high-risk populations are the least likely to have access to high-speed internet. In addition, 15 percent of Americans own a cellphone, but not a smartphone. That percentage increases to 24 percent in rural areas. We must make every effort to ensure that telehealth closes existing disparities in health care rather than entrenching them.



Securing the Future of Telehealth

ACHP urges Congress to:

- **Allow more providers to deliver telehealth** by expanding the types of clinicians eligible to offer services via telehealth, Congress can expand needed capre options to the health care delivery menu.
- **Ensure ALL telehealth encounters are utilized in Medicare Advantage risk-adjustment.** Medicare Advantage plans rely on audio-only calls to deliver essential care coordination for high-risk patient populations, including individuals with multiple chronic conditions, low socioeconomic status and seniors.
- **Improve access to virtual mental and behavioral health services.** Congress can reduce unnecessary barriers to care by removing the in-person requirement included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.
- **Advance MedPAC's recommendation to temporarily continue certain telehealth expansions.** Extending telehealth flexibilities post-public health emergency will allow time to further understand the impact of telehealth on access, quality and cost – and establish a sustainable and permanent care delivery solution, focusing on high-value care and improved patient outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries.

The Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP) represents the nation's top-performing non-profit health plans to improve affordability and outcomes in the health care system. ACHP member companies provide high-quality coverage and care to 24 million Americans across 36 states and D.C.

