

# DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE OF VIRTUAL CARE

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; maintaining chronic care management; and delivering mental health services. Telehealth provides consumers with more choices for how they would like to receive care and recent studies show that it does not add to the overall volume of services.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth was expanded significantly. In December 2022, Congress recognized the patient benefit telehealth has provided by extending telehealth beyond the end of the public health emergency (PHE) until December 31, 2024. This extension gives policymakers an opportunity to evaluate telehealth success in a non-PHE setting. The answer is clear: telehealth flexibilities should be made permanent to ensure consumers have continued access to the care options they want AND health plans and providers have the assurances they need to continue providing care to patients. However, success in virtual care is not isolated to the continuation of traditional telehealth flexibilities. To ensure virtual care continues at a high-level, the Acute Hospital Care at Home Program waivers should be continued, and Congress must relax arbitrary requirements to access behavioral health services which only limit patient access. Continuing telehealth flexibilities and Hospital at Home waivers while relaxing these arbitrary behavioral health requirements will ensure full-patient virtual care options.



## Securing the Future of Virtual Care

ACHP urges Congress to:

- **Pass bipartisan legislation to permanently extend telehealth flexibilities beyond December 31, 2024.** The CONNECT for Health Act (S. 2016/H.R. 4189) provides a permanent extension of telehealth flexibilities to ensure patients have continued access to the care they need.
- **Support Hospital at Home Models.** The Acute Hospital Care at Home Program waivers expire December 31, 2024. It is imperative that Congress extend these waivers to ensure hospitals and health systems continue implementing proven, effective and useful Hospital at Home programs.
- **Improve access to virtual mental and behavioral health services.** Congress should pass the bipartisan Telemental Health Care Access Act (S. 2061, H.R. 4058), which removes the current requirement that doctors see Medicare beneficiaries within six months of being treated virtually for mental and behavioral health concerns.

The Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP) is the only national organization promoting the unique payer-provider aligned model in health care. ACHP member companies collaborate with their provider partners to deliver higher-quality coverage and care to tens of millions of Americans in nearly 40 states and D.C.



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