

Telehealth State/ Federal Updates

JUNE 24, 2021

WashingtonState
Telehealth Collaborative

State/Federal Updates

- [Digital Equity Act 2021](#) was introduced in the U.S. Senate on Friday, June 11th, which aims to close the digital divide through 2 grant programs and builds on recent efforts to increase access to broadband by prioritizing “digital inclusion”
 - One pager [here](#)
 - Press release [here](#)
 - [Official website](#)
- U.S Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a [testimony](#) regarding their ongoing assessment of COVID-19 flexibilities within the Medicare and Medicaid programs
 - Testimony highlighted CMS data on recent telehealth utilization
- Department of Justice announced May 26th that it will be pressing charges for fraudulent use of COVID Telehealth flexibilities
- U.S. Senate is considering a telehealth bill for veterans, including offering more virtual mental health services and how to best serve rural veterans
- U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate had hearings that addressed telehealth equity, broadband challenges and funding, the digital divide, ensuring patient privacy for telehealth visits, and prescribing controlled substances via telehealth

State/Federal Updates

- The [S. 1704 Telehealth Expansion Act of 2021](#) was introduced, which would permanently allow all Americans to access telehealth services without the burden of first meeting a high deductible
 - Press release [here](#)
- The H.R. 3371 Home Health Emergency Access to Telehealth (HEAT) was reintroduced, which is a bipartisan bill that would provide Medicare reimbursement for audio and video telehealth services furnished by home health emergencies during the COVID-19 emergency and future public health emergencies
 - Press release [here](#)
- Permanency for Audio-Only Telehealth Act was introduced in the House of Representatives, which would enable audio-only telehealth services for Medicare enrollees and allow the homes of Medicare beneficiaries to be originating sites for audio-only telehealth
 - Press release [here](#)
- The [S. 1798 Telehealth Improvement for Kids' Essential Services \(TIKES\) Act of 2021](#) was introduced, which seeks to increase telehealth access for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) beneficiaries
 - One-pager [here](#)

HB 1196 Bill:

Do established patient-provider relationships impact audio-only healthcare visits?

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HB 1196 Bill: Do established patient-provider relationships impact audio-only healthcare visits?

- Requires reimbursement for audio-only telemedicine services if “the covered person has an established relationship with the provider”
- “Established relationship” means the covered person:
 - has had at least one in-person appointment within the past year with the provider providing audio-only telemedicine **OR** with a provider employed at the same clinic as the provider providing audio-only telemedicine
- **OR**
 - was referred to the provider providing audio-only telemedicine by another provider who has had at least one in-person appointment with the covered person within the past year and has provided relevant medical information to the provider providing audio-only telemedicine”
- Original bill language [here](#)