



WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF TELEHEALTH SERVICES?

Recently, a significant number of states have passed legislation allowing the reimbursement of behavioral health services via audio-visual and/or audio only. However, some states telehealth regulations remain tied to the federal PHE. Experts, Yarbrough and Kwong (2022) predict that the PHE will be extended until April 11, 2023 with Medicare telehealth flexibilities ending 151 days after the PHE expires. For behavioral health services offered during the 151 days after the PHE has ended, there will be no requirement that people are seen in-person for outpatient sessions. After that, designated in-person visits for outpatient patients will be put in place- every 6 months for new patients and every 12 months for established patients. Finally, it appears that behavioral health services delivered via audio-only will remain covered through December, 2023.

A new report by Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association gives an overview of research regarding the uptake of services delivered via telehealth (audio and visual) and audio only. The report gives recommendations for ensuring the future of telehealth for Substance Use Disorders (SUDs):

- Federal support for recognition and reciprocity of state licenses
- Permanently enact and expand PHE telehealth regulatory changes
- Increase funding for mobile app and assistive telehealth services
- Consider the privacy and ethical implications of telehealth use

The report ends with a quote about the role of telehealth in increasing access to intervention, treatment, and recovery support services for people who use drugs and alcohol.

'Individuals living with SUD are part of a particularly vulnerable group of people who would likely benefit from increased accessibility to health care providers through telehealth. If some of these issues can be addressed and overcome, the future of health care in America can include telehealth services based on evidence-based, informed practices that are designed to be accessible to everyone.'



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