

**CMS Alert!****Medicare Beneficiaries Expanded Telehealth Benefits During COVID-19 Outbreak**

Under the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act and Section 1135 waiver authority, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) broadened access to Medicare telehealth services, so beneficiaries can get a wider range of services from their doctors and other clinicians without traveling to a health care facility. On March 6, 2020, Medicare began temporarily paying clinicians to furnish beneficiary telehealth services residing across the entire country.

Before this announcement, Medicare could only pay clinicians for telehealth services, such as routine visits in certain circumstances. For example, the beneficiary getting the services must live in a rural area and travel to a local medical facility to get telehealth services from a doctor in a remote location. In addition, the beneficiary generally could not get telehealth services in their home.

Under this Section 1135 waiver expansion, a range of providers, such as doctors, nurse practitioners, clinical psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers, can offer a specific set of telehealth services. The specific set of services beneficiaries can get include evaluation and management visits (common office visits), mental health counseling, and preventive health screenings. Beneficiaries can get telehealth services in any health care facility including a physician's office, hospital, nursing home or rural health clinic, as well as from their homes. This change broadens telehealth flexibility without regard to the beneficiary's diagnosis, because at this critical point it is important to ensure beneficiaries follow CDC guidance including practicing social distancing to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This change will help prevent vulnerable beneficiaries from unnecessarily entering a health care facility when clinicians can meet their needs remotely.

To read the Fact Sheet on this announcement visit: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/medicare-telemedicine-health-care-provider-fact-sheet>

To read the Frequently Asked Questions on this announcement visit: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-telehealth-frequently-asked-questions-faqs-31720.pdf>