

[COVID-19: U.S., State Governments Expand Access to Telehealth Services; Reduce Other Barriers to Care](#)



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. and many state governments have taken a number of steps to expand access to telehealth services and reduce other barriers to care. Among other things, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has eliminated a number of restrictions on the coverage of telehealth services under Medicare to enable coverage of services provided to patients, including new patients, located in their homes. Many commercial payors have also taken action to expand access to telehealth, including by eliminating co-payments for such services. Many states have temporarily waived in-state licensure requirements to enable physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners, and other medical personnel licensed in any state to provide telehealth services to their residents. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG) announced that physicians and other practitioners will not be subject to administrative sanctions for reducing or waiving any cost-sharing obligations Federal health care program beneficiaries may owe for telehealth services. The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) additionally announced that during the pandemic, it will allow healthcare providers to provide telehealth services to patients through any non-public facing communication applications such as Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangout, and Skype. Finally, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have both taken steps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to remove barriers restricting patient access to controlled substances and medicines. We review these developments below.

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