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[bluecare.bcbst.com](http://bluecare.bcbst.com)

July 16, 2021

## **RE: Telehealth and Telephonic/Audio-Only Services**

Dear Health Care Provider,

Thank you for caring for our BlueCare and TennCareSelect members. We're writing to share an important message about our telehealth coverage.

The temporary telehealth policies established by the Division of TennCare, BlueCare Tennessee, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) at the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency expired on June 30, 2021. However, consistent with recent state legislation, we'll continue to cover the same telehealth and telephonic/audio-only services we covered during the pandemic. Here's what you need to know.

In August 2020, the Tennessee legislature expanded access to telehealth by requiring health insurance companies to reimburse providers an originating site fee that was set by CMS before Aug. 20, 2020. For the purpose of telehealth, the originating site is the patient's location.

For a telehealth visit to be covered under this measure, the patient must have been seen in person by the physician or the health service provider's practice group within the 16 months prior to the telemedicine visit. Tennessee law also allows health insurance companies to cover remote patient monitoring services, if the services are covered by Medicare. Remote patient monitoring lets patients share their health information with a health care service provider electronically. All medical providers, except for pain management clinics, chronic nonmalignant treatment providers, and veterinarians, are included under Tennessee law. The licensing boards for medical professionals will circulate rules for practicing telehealth and telemedicine. Skilled therapists (audiologists, as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapists), behavioral health providers, and alcohol and drug counselors are also included.

Tennessee law also changed the definition of "provider-based telemedicine." The new definition allows patients to receive behavioral health services through Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-compliant, audio-only conversations when other HIPAA-compliant methods are unavailable, including:

- Real-time, interactive audio-visual telecommunications
- Electronic technology
- Store-and-forward telemedicine services

### **Billing for Telehealth Services**

When billing for telehealth or telephonic/audio-only services, please continue to use place of service 02 or modifier -95 (if billing a place of service other than 02) on your claims. If we make any future changes to these billing guidelines or our telehealth policies, we'll let you know in advance.

If you have any questions about these policies, please contact your Provider Network Manager. You can find the name of your contact at [provider.bcbst.com/contact-us/my-contact](http://provider.bcbst.com/contact-us/my-contact).

Sincerely,

Your Provider Service Team