
E-Consult Toolkit

NEWS
July 2019

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Policy

Medi-Cal Announces It Will Cover E-Consult in New Provider Manual



On July 29th, DHCS released its [draft Medi-Cal telehealth policy](#). In the document, reimbursement for e-consults is defined as follows:

"A health care provider at the distant site may bill for an e-consult with the CPT code [99451] below when the benefits or services delivered meet the procedural definition and components

of the CPT code as defined by the AMA as well as any requirements described in this section of the Medi-Cal provider manual."

While the announcement states that the new policy is effective as of July 1, 2019, it also notes that as DHCS completes its system testing, providers will need to hold claims until August when the All Plan Letter and the manual are [published online](#).

CMS 2020 Rule Proposal Maintains E-Consult

On July 29th, CMS issued a [rule proposal](#) to update payment policies, payment rates, and quality provisions that "better accessibility, quality, affordability, empowerment, and innovation", states the [CMS press release](#). The proposed rule maintains reimbursement codes for interprofessional consults, or e-consults, and also allows for submission of claims for complementary services through "duplicative payments" for CPT code 99451 and RPM services, emphasizing e-consult's expanding contribution to patient-centered care and chronic disease management.

CMS is requesting public comments on the [proposed rule](#), which will be published on August 14th. Please submit comments through the E-Consult Workgroup at electronic_consult@bluepathhealth.com by COB September 27.

Access

Inland Empire Health Plan Success: 10,000 E-Consults Since 2018

Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), one of the nation's largest Medicaid and Medicare plans, has significantly improved access to specialty care for its 2.4 million members through its e-consult program called the Multi-County eConsult Initiative (MCEL). Started in 2018 in partnership with two health systems, Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC) and Riverside University Health System (RUHS), MCEL is now used by 240 primary care providers, 167 specialists and 63 clinical sites.

In a press release, IEHP stated that the "program is working" by providing specialist-guided care to 25% of patients leading to "faster and accurate diagnoses and treatment." This improved access to specialty care has been critical to IEHP which provides coverage to individuals in an area that has "long been overwhelmed with the volume of patients seeking access to specialty

care."

IEHP's MCEL emphasizes how e-consult partnerships between providers and payers result in significant improvements in both patient care and provider satisfaction. IEHP is "committed to reduce wait times and promote more efficient care for our members, while at the same time reducing the number of no-shows for our providers," said CEO Jarrod B. McNaughton. "We are in complete support of this initiative and it is now fully launched in all our sites," stated Jennifer Cruikshank, chief operating officer of RUHS.

Blue Shield Promise-North County Health Services E-Consult Collaboration Delivers High-Quality Care

Since early 2018, [North County Health Services](#) (NCHS) and [Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan](#) have worked together to improve specialty care access for patients with the use of or e-consults.

Since January 2018, NCHS providers have submitted 5,648 e-consults. Among these transactions, 75% have replaced face-to-face visits and 93% have influenced care plans. To sustain access to these benefits for all its patients, NCHS is working to build collaborations with other payers like the one it has built with Blue Shield Promise.

"We want everyone to be in the model of Blue Shield Promise so we are continuing to accrue data to create a compelling business case for other payers," explains Dr. Tellez. At the same time, Blue Shield Promise is expanding its support of e-consult to both its own Antelope Valley clinics as well as other FQHCs to ensure that its members have appropriate access to specialty care. Read more: [E-Consult Case Studies](#).

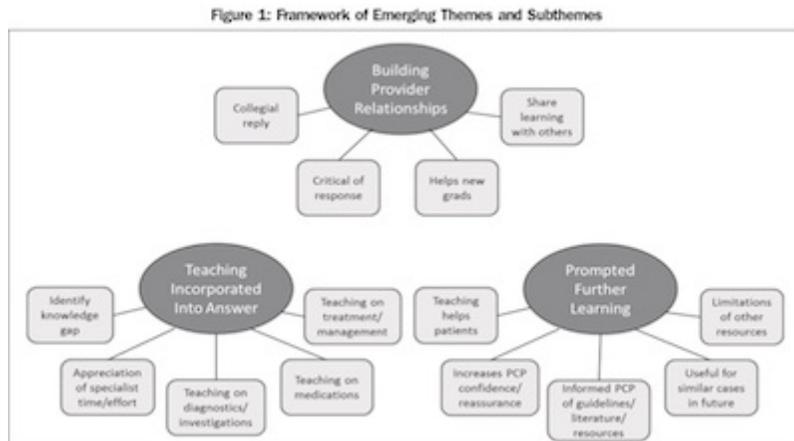
Research

Published Research: July 2019

- [Electronic Consultations to Hepatologists Reduce Wait Time for Visits, Improve Communication, and Result in Cost Savings](#). A retrospective study of e-consult use shows how e-consult can relieve the burden of chronic liver disease. Over the study period from March 1, 2015 to May 1,

2018, 187 e-consults were identified. The average response time was 22 hours, much faster than the average 68-day wait time for initial in clinic appointments, and primary care providers were able to use specialists' recommendations for 96.9% of patients.

- [eConsults and Learning Between Primary Care Providers and Specialists](#) A review of PCP comments reveals educational value of e-consults. The study concludes that e-consults "foster stronger relationships with specialists, deliver responses that provided teaching in multiple areas of their practice, and support further learning that extended beyond the case at hand and into their overall practice."



Events

Save the Date: E-Consult Workgroup Webinar Thursday, August 15th

Please join us for our next E-Consult Workgroup Webinar on August 15th from 12 to 1 p.m. Pacific Time. Connect online: <https://zoom.us/j/966754653>, or dial in: +16699006833,,966754653#.

Save the Date: Annual E-Consult Workshop, November 4th to 5th

Join our Annual E-Consult Workshop on November 4th to 5th in Sacramento! For details, contact electronic_consult@bluepathhealth.com.

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