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**DATE:** August 5, 2019

ALL PLAN LETTER 19-009

**TO:** ALL MEDI-CAL MANAGED CARE HEALTH PLANS

**SUBJECT:** TELEHEALTH SERVICES POLICY

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this All Plan Letter (APL) is to provide clarification to Medi-Cal managed care health plans (MCPs) on the Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) policy on Medi-Cal services offered through a telehealth modality as outlined in the Medi-Cal Provider Manual.<sup>1</sup> This includes clarification on the services that are covered and the expectations related to documentation for the telehealth modality.<sup>2</sup>

**BACKGROUND:**

The California Telehealth Advancement Act of 2011, as described in Assembly Bill (AB) 415 (Logue, Chapter 547, Statutes of 2011),<sup>3</sup> codified requirements and definitions for the provision of telehealth services in Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section 2290.5,<sup>4</sup> Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 1374.13,<sup>5</sup> and Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Sections 14132.72<sup>6</sup> and 14132.725.<sup>7</sup> For definitions of the terms used in this APL, see the "Medicine: Telehealth" section of the Medi-Cal Provider Manual. Additional information and announcements regarding telehealth are available on the "Telehealth" web page of DHCS' website.

BPC Section 2290.5 requires: 1) documentation of either verbal or written consent for the use of telehealth from the patient; 2) compliance with all state and federal laws regarding the confidentiality of health care information; 3) that a patient's rights to the patient's own medical information apply to telehealth interactions; and 4) that the patient

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<sup>1</sup> The "Medicine: Telehealth" section of the Medi-Cal Provider Manual is available at: [https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/masters-mtp/part2/mednetele\\_m01o03.doc](https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/masters-mtp/part2/mednetele_m01o03.doc)

<sup>2</sup> More information on this policy clarification can be found on the "Telehealth" web page of the DHCS website, available at: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/pages/telehealth.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> AB 415 is available at:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201120120AB415](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB415)

<sup>4</sup> BPC Section 2290.5 is available at:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=2290.5.&lawCode=BPC](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=2290.5.&lawCode=BPC)

<sup>5</sup> HSC Section 1374.13 is available at:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=1374.13.&lawCode=HSC](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=1374.13.&lawCode=HSC)

<sup>6</sup> WIC Section 14132.72 is available at:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=14132.72.&lawCode=WIC](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=14132.72.&lawCode=WIC)

<sup>7</sup> WIC Section 14132.725 is available at:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=14132.725.&lawCode=WIC](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=14132.725.&lawCode=WIC)

not be precluded from receiving in-person health care services after agreeing to receive telehealth services. HSC Section 1374.13 states there is no limitation on the type of setting between a health care provider and a patient when providing covered services appropriately through a telehealth modality.

**POLICY:**

Each telehealth provider must be licensed in the State of California and enrolled as a Medi-Cal rendering provider or non-physician medical practitioner (NMP). If the provider is not located in California, they must be affiliated with a Medi-Cal enrolled provider group in California (or a border community) as outlined in the Medi-Cal Provider Manual. Each telehealth provider providing Medi-Cal covered services to an MCP member via a telehealth modality must meet the requirements of BPC Section 2290.5(a)(3), or equivalent requirements under California law in which the provider is considered to be licensed, such as providers who are certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, which is accredited by the National Commission on Certifying Agencies. Existing Medi-Cal covered services, identified by Current Procedural Terminology – 4<sup>th</sup> Revision (CPT-4) or Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes and subject to any existing treatment authorization requirements, may be provided via a telehealth modality if all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- The treating health care provider at the distant site believes the services being provided are clinically appropriate to be delivered via telehealth based upon evidence-based medicine and/or best clinical judgment;
- The member has provided verbal or written consent;
- The medical record documentation substantiates the services delivered via telehealth meet the procedural definition and components of the CPT-4 or HCPCS code(s) associated with the covered service; and
- The services provided via telehealth meet all laws regarding confidentiality of health care information and a patient's right to the patient's own medical information.

Certain types of services cannot be appropriately delivered via telehealth. These include services that would otherwise require the in-person presence of the patient for any reason, such as services performed in an operating room or while the patient is under anesthesia, where direct visualization or instrumentation of bodily structures is required, or procedures that involve sampling of tissue or insertion/removal of medical devices. A provider must assess the appropriateness of the telehealth modality to the patient's level of acuity at the time of the service. A health care provider is not required to be present with the patient at the originating site unless determined medically necessary by the provider at the distant site.

MCP providers must use the modifiers defined in the Medi-Cal Provider Manual with the appropriate CPT-4 or HCPCS codes when coding for services delivered via telehealth, for both synchronous interactions and asynchronous store and forward telecommunications. Consultations via asynchronous electronic transmission cannot be initiated directly by patients. Electronic consultations (e-consults) are permissible using CPT-4 code 99451, modifier(s), and medical record documentation as defined in the Medi-Cal Provider Manual. E-consults are permissible only between health care providers. Telehealth may be used for purposes of network adequacy as outlined in APL 19-002: Network Certification Requirements, or any future iterations of this APL, as well as any applicable DHCS guidance.<sup>8</sup>

MCPs are responsible for ensuring that their delegates comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, contract requirements, and other DHCS guidance, including APLs and Policy Letters. These requirements must be communicated by each MCP to all delegated entities and subcontractors.

If you have any questions regarding this APL, please contact your Managed Care Operations Division Contract Manager.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Nathan Nau

Nathan Nau, Chief  
Managed Care Quality and Monitoring Division

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<sup>8</sup> APLs are available at: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Pages/AllPlanLetters.aspx>