

CMS Increases Payment for Audio-Only Telephone Visits to Match Payments for Similar Office and Outpatient Visits

On April 30, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued another rule change in an effort to expand beneficiaries' access to telehealth services. This rule change provides a wider range of care to patients using telehealth services and eases the fear or uncertainty that many beneficiaries may face when having to access, download or utilize audio-visual technology for a telehealth visit.

In a press release, CMS announced the following rule changes concerning telehealth:

- Medicare will pay for certain audio-only telephone services between beneficiaries and their physicians and other clinicians;
- Many behavioral health services can be provided via audio-only telephone service using new waiver authority;
- Payments for these telephone visits are being increased to match payments for similar office and outpatient visits (increasing the range of payments from \$14-41 to about \$46-\$110); and
- Payments for these subject telephone services are retroactive to March 1, 2020.

CMS has also released [full list of telehealth services](#) payable under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, including audio-only telephone services.

Nelson Hardiman is staying on top of rule changes like the one above and will provide an update to this article as CMS and other federal agencies continue to release new rule changes and guidance concerning the patients' access to telehealth services.

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