

Publications

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Medicare Telehealth Gets Another Temporary Lifeline – Will Congress Make it Permanent?

On March 15, 2025, President Trump signed a continuing resolution to avert a government shutdown, which included a critical six-month extension of Medicare telehealth flexibilities through September 30, 2025. This six-month extension provides a temporary reprieve from the looming expiration of telehealth waivers that have been in place since the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). While this is a positive development, it underscores the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Medicare's long-term telehealth policy—an issue that Congress must address with a more permanent solution. The healthcare industry has increasingly emphasized the need for regulatory certainty to support long-term planning, investment in telehealth infrastructure and sustained access to care for Medicare beneficiaries.

What the Extension Means for Providers

Medicare providers will continue to operate under the existing telehealth flexibilities for an additional six months. This means:

- **No Geographic or Site Restrictions** – Medicare beneficiaries can receive telehealth services regardless of their location, including from their homes.
- **Expanded Practitioner Eligibility** – A broader range of healthcare providers, including physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists, can continue furnishing telehealth services.
- **Coverage for Audio-Only Services** – Medicare will maintain reimbursement for certain audio-only visits, which have been critical for reaching patients without reliable broadband access.
- **Hospital and Facility-Based Telehealth** – Flexibilities allowing hospitals and health systems to use telehealth for certain hospital-at-home and outpatient services remain in place.
- **FQHCs and RHCs Participation** - Federally Qualified Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics can continue to offer telehealth services, ensuring access in underserved areas.
- **Mental Health Flexibilities** - The in-person evaluation requirement for mental health services delivered via telehealth has been deferred, allowing patients to continue receiving mental health care via telehealth.

Related Capabilities

- Telehealth
- Telehealth Enforcement & Compliance
- Food, Drug & Device
- Executive Orders

For hospitals, health systems and provider groups that have invested heavily in telehealth infrastructure, this extension offers short-term stability. However, the uncertainty beyond September 2025 remains a pressing concern.

Industry Perspective on the Need for Regulatory Certainty

Since the expanded use of telehealth under Medicare, healthcare providers, hospitals and technology developers have adapted their care delivery models and made significant investments in telehealth infrastructure. Many industry stakeholders have highlighted the following considerations as Congress continues evaluating the long-term future of Medicare telehealth policy:

- **Regulatory Stability for Long-Term Decision-Making** - Healthcare organizations make strategic decisions—ranging from workforce planning to technology investments—based on long-term regulatory and reimbursement expectations. Without a definitive, long-term Medicare telehealth policy, providers must plan within an uncertain framework, creating challenges in making sustainable investments.
- **Access to Care for Underserved and Rural Populations** - Telehealth has played a key role in expanding access to care, particularly for rural and underserved populations who may face geographic, transportation or mobility barriers. Healthcare providers serving these communities have emphasized the importance of telehealth in maintaining access to primary care, specialty services and mental health treatment. Given the growing reliance on telehealth among Medicare beneficiaries, there is industry interest in ensuring continued access to these services beyond temporary extensions.
- **Innovation and Growth in Digital Health** - The expansion of telehealth has supported technological innovation across the healthcare industry, from remote patient monitoring to AI-driven clinical documentation tools. Industry stakeholders have noted that uncertainty around Medicare's long-term telehealth policy can impact investment in emerging digital health solutions, as healthcare organizations and technology developers assess future regulatory and reimbursement environments.

What's Next? The Push for Permanent Reform

With the clock now ticking toward the new September 30, 2025, deadline, major healthcare organizations are advocating for permanent legislative action. The American Telemedicine Association (ATA) and American Hospital Association (AHA) continue to urge Congress to cement telehealth's place in modern healthcare, emphasizing its role in expanding access, improving outcomes and addressing provider shortages. Similarly, several bipartisan efforts have been initiated to establish permanent telehealth policies:

1. Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024 (H.R. 7623)

This bill seeks to permanently extend certain telehealth flexibilities that were initially authorized during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

2. Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2023 (H.R. 4189; S. 2016)

This bill proposes to expand coverage of telehealth services under Medicare, aiming to remove geographic restrictions and expand originating sites, including to allow patients to receive telehealth services in their homes.

3. Preserving Telehealth, Hospital, and Ambulance Access Act (H.R. 8261)

This bill aims to extend key telehealth flexibilities through 2026, including provisions for

hospital-at-home programs and ambulance services.

While there appears to be bipartisan support recognizing telehealth as a vital component of modern healthcare delivery, a long-term solution is critical to ensuring that telehealth remains a viable and effective care delivery option for Medicare beneficiaries well beyond 2025. Providers should take advantage of the additional time to solidify their telehealth strategies while remaining engaged in advocacy efforts.

Stakeholders—including hospitals, health systems, provider groups and digital health technology companies —must continue urging Congress to pass permanent telehealth legislation that preserves access, ensures fair reimbursement and provides regulatory clarity. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to reach out to Joelle M. Wilson, Polsinelli's Executive Action Working Group or your regular Polsinelli attorney.