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Telehealth Flexibilities Extended – For Now

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The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, signed by President Biden on March 15, 2022, extends federal telehealth flexibilities beyond the expiration date of the public health emergency for a limited time. The public health emergency is currently set to expire on April 16, 2022, but it may be renewed for another ninety days.

For 151 days following the expiration of the public health emergency, health care providers may continue to rely on relaxations of certain federal requirements that have made practicing via telehealth easier, and made care more accessible to patients, no matter where they are located.

The flexibilities extending past the expiration of the public health emergency include relaxations of requirements regarding **location** (any site, including the patient's home, is acceptable); **provider type** (eligible telehealth providers continue to include occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, federally qualified health centers, and rural health clinics); **audio-only services**; **telemental health** (in-person visits not yet required); and **recertification of hospice care** via telehealth.

This stopgap may give Congress time to make telehealth reform permanent. The removal of restrictions on telehealth during the public health emergency and beyond benefits both providers and patients. More accommodating—and permanent—changes to the regulatory landscape would be welcome and could expand access to virtual primary and specialty care to Medicare patients across the country.



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