PAYMENT POLICIES

Telemedicine Services (Commercial)

Scope

This policy applies to:

☑️ Kaiser Permanente Health Plan of Washington
☑️ Kaiser Permanente Health Plan of Washington Options, Inc.
☑️ Commercial
☑️ Medicare
☐ Medicaid

Policy

When benefits allow, telemedicine services will be reimbursed when all of the following criteria are met:

a) The services are medically necessary.

b) The originating site is qualified.

c) The distant site practitioner is qualified.

d) Live interactive video is used or store-and-forward technology. Associated office visit between member and the referring practitioner when store-and-forward technology is used.

e) Patient is present at an originating site and able to participate.

f) The claim is billed according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) guidelines for telehealth services.

Billing/Coding Guidelines

All claims will be billed according to CMS guidelines.

The practitioner located at the distant site must submit the appropriate HCPCS/CPT codes for the services rendered. Modifier 95 must be appended to all codes when the service is conducted via a real-time interactive audio and video telecommunications system. Modifier GQ must be appended to all codes when the service is conducted via asynchronous telecommunications “store-and-forward” system. Modifier 95 and GQ does not increase or decrease reimbursement rates.

If the originating site is a facility provider, the site fee charge must be submitted as an outpatient service with revenue code 0780 and corresponding HCPCS code Q3014. If the originating site is not a facility, bill HCPCS code Q3014.
Policy Definitions

Distant Site Practitioners
Practitioners at the distant site who may furnish and receive payment for covered telemedicine services are defined under Title 18 or chapter 70.127 RCW, to practice health or health-related services or otherwise practicing health care services in Washington State consistent with state law or contracted providers.

Interactive Audio and Video Telecommunication
Medical information is communicated in real-time with the use of interactive audio and video communications equipment. The real-time communication is between the performing physician and a distant physician or health care specialist. The patient is present during the communication. This is also referred to as interactive telecommunication.

Originating Site
A qualifying site the patient is physically located at while receiving health care services through telemedicine. The originating sites for telemedicine services are:
- The offices of physicians or practitioners
- Hospitals
- Critical access hospitals
- Rural health clinics
- Home
- Federally qualified health centers
- Hospital-based or CAH-based Renal Dialysis Centers
- Skilled nursing facilities
- Community mental health centers

Store-and-Forward Technology
The use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person’s medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management of the covered person. Does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email.

Telemedicine
The delivery of health care services through the use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. “Telemedicine” does not include the use of audio-only telephone, facsimile, or email.

Prerequisite(s)
Service meets Washington State regulations for telemedicine services.
References

“Elimination of the GT Modifier for Telehealth Services” Medicare Learning Network (MLN) Number: MM10152

“Senate Bill 6519,” State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session

“Senate Bill 5175,” State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session

“Final Policy, Payment, and Quality Provisions in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for Calendar Year 2018” Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

“New Place of Service (POS) Code for Telehealth and Distant Site Payment Policy” MLN Matters

Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Related Policies

Telehealth (Medicare)

Virtual Care (Commercial)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: A patient is in a rural health clinic and uses video conferencing technology to interact with a distant site practitioner for a consultation. Is this a reimbursable telemedicine service?

A1: Yes. This service will be reimbursable; it is considered telemedicine according to Washington State statute.

Q2: A patient is in a critical access hospital; the practitioner creates a video regarding the patient’s medical state. The video is later forwarded to a distant site practitioner who then reviews and replies to the originating practitioner with a diagnosis and medical management treatment plan. Is this a reimbursable telemedicine service?

A2: Yes. This service will be reimbursable; this service is considered store-and-forward telemedicine under the Washington State statute.

Q3: What is the difference between telemedicine services and virtual care services?

A3: Telemedicine services use interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. Store-and-forward technology use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person’s medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management can also be used for a telemedicine service but there must be an associated office visit between the commercial member and the referring health care provider.
Virtual care services use online technology (computer, tablet, or smartphone), telephonic, or secure messaging transmissions of patient initiated care from a remote location (e.g., home); with a provider for the purpose of diagnosis and is treatment-focused; the member is NOT located at a healthcare site.

Q4: What is the difference between telemedicine services and telehealth services?

A4: Telemedicine services use interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the patient at the originating site and the provider, for the purpose of diagnosis, consultation, or treatment for commercial members. Store-and-forward technology use of an asynchronous transmission of a covered person’s medical information from an originating site to the health care provider at a distant site which results in medical diagnosis and management can also be used for a telemedicine service but there must be an associated office visit between the commercial member and the referring health care provider.

Telehealth services are a live, interactive audio and visual transmission of a physician-patient encounter from one site to another, using telecommunications technologies that follow CMS guidelines for Medicare members.

Q5: Skype is used from the patient’s home to contact a provider for a diagnosis-based billable visit. Is this a reimbursable telemedicine service?

A5: Yes. A patient’s home is recognized as a qualifying originating site as of 1/1/2018 and therefore is considered a telemedicine service when billed appropriately.