CONNECT for Health Act of 2019

Sens. Schatz (D-HI), Wicker (R-MS), Cardin (D-MD), Thune (R-SD), Warner (D-VA), & Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Reps. Thompson (D-CA), Welch (D-VT), Schweikert (R-AZ), & Johnson (R-OH)

The CONNECT for Health Act of 2019 promotes higher quality of care, increased access to care, and reduced spending in Medicare through the expansion of telehealth services.

Quick Facts

- Numerous studies on telehealth—the use of telecommunications technologies to furnish health care services remotely and in real-time—have shown benefits for quality of care, access to care, and reduced spending. [1]
- Telehealth increases access to care in areas with workforce shortages and for individuals who have barriers to accessing care.
- However, current statutory restrictions—such as geographic and originating site requirements that only permit beneficiaries to receive telehealth services if they are in certain rural areas and at certain clinical sites—create barriers that limit the use of telehealth in Medicare.
- These restrictions result in low utilization of telehealth—only 0.25 percent of Medicare beneficiaries use telehealth services. [2]
- Several provisions of the CONNECT for Health Act of 2017 were enacted in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, and CMS has also made advances in covering remote patient monitoring services and other virtual services.
- **The CONNECT for Health Act of 2019, based on extensive input from stakeholders across the health care system, aims to build on these successes to further advance the use of telehealth in Medicare.**

[1] https://www.cchpca.org/resources/research-catalogues
[2] https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Information-on-Medicare-Telehealth-Report.pdf

Bill Summary

Sec. 1 – Table of contents.

Sec. 2 – Findings and sense of Congress.

Sec. 3 – Provides the HHS Secretary authority to waive telehealth restrictions when certain criteria are met.

Sec. 4 – Removes geographic restrictions and adds the home as an originating site for mental health services.

Sec. 5 – Removes geographic restrictions on certain originating sites for emergency medical care services.

Sec. 6 – Requires CMS' process to add telehealth services to better consider how telehealth can improve access to care.

Sec. 7 – Removes geographic restrictions on Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics (RHCs) and allows FQHCs and RHCs to furnish telehealth services as distant sites.

Sec. 8 – Removes the geographic and originating site restrictions for facilities of the Indian Health Service or Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems.

Sec. 9 – Allows for the waiver of telehealth restrictions during national and public health emergencies.

Sec. 10 – Allows for the use of telehealth in the recertification of a beneficiary for the hospice benefit.

Sec. 11 – Clarifies that the provision of technologies to a Medicare beneficiary for the purpose of furnishing services using technology is not considered "remuneration" under fraud and abuse laws.

Sec. 12 – Requires MedPAC to study how different payers cover the home as an originating site and what services would be suitable for the home to be an originating site under Medicare.

Sec. 13 – Requires an analysis of the impact of telehealth waivers in CMS Innovation Center models.

Sec. 14 – Authorizes a model to test allowing additional health professionals to furnish telehealth services.

Sec. 15 – Encourages the CMS Innovation Center to test telehealth models in Medicare.

Endorsed by over 120 organizations

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Advanced Medical Technology Association
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Connected Care
Alliance for Home Dialysis
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
AMDA Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
America's Essential Hospitals
American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Diabetes Educators
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Heart Association
American Hospital Association
American Medical Association
American Medical Group Association
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Telemedicine Association
American Well
America's Health Insurance Plans
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Association for Executives in Healthcare Information Applications
Association for Executives in Healthcare Information Technology
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association
BluePath Health
Center for Telehealth and e-Health Law
Centerstone
Children's Health
Children's Health Fund
Children's National Hospital
CICONIX
Cleveland Clinic Health System
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Connected Health Initiative
Connected Home Living
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
E-Consult Workgroup
Electronic Health Record (EHR) Association
Federation of American Hospitals
Federation of State Medical Boards
FreeState Connect
Global Partnership for Telehealth
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Health Innovation Alliance
Healthcare Association of Hawaii
Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)

Healthcare Leadership Council
Hillrom
InHome Healthcare Services
InSight Telepsychiatry
Intel
International OCD Foundation
InTouch Health
The Jewish Federations of North America
Kaiser Permanente
Lanai Community Health Center
LeadingAge
LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies
Lincare
Medical Group Management Association
Michigan Medicine
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Healthcare Quality
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association for the Support of Long Term Care
National Association of ACOs
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Rural Health Clinics
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Health IT Collaborative for the Underserved
National MS Society
National Partnership for Hospice Innovation
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Nemours Children's Health System
NewYork-Presbyterian
No Health without Mental Health
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association
OCHIN
Ochsner Health System
Oliver Wyman's Health & Life Sciences
Otsuka America Pharmaceutical
Personal Connected Health Alliance
Pillsy
Providence St. Joseph Health
Public Health Institute
PursueCare
Remote Cardiac Services Provider Group
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
Strategic Health Innovation Exchange Collaborative
Teladoc Health
Telecommunications Industry Association
Texas Health Information Management Association
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TouchPointCare
Tourette Association of America
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