



Telemedicine

A POSITION STATEMENT
from the Alliance for Patient Access

OVERVIEW

Telemedicine allows patients to consult with their health care providers via phone, computer, tablet or mobile device. The remote visits enable health care providers to assess symptoms, follow up on previous visits, make treatment decisions and explore medication side effects – while patients remain at home, work or a local clinic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine has provided a bridge between patients and providers. To accommodate the greater need for telemedicine, policymakers have relaxed restrictions on when and how telemedicine can be used. They have also implemented reimbursement for telemedicine, making it a viable offering for health care providers.

Many patients and health care providers now see telemedicine as a critical part of care, especially for patients who struggle with the logistics of getting to a doctor's appointment or those with compromised immune systems who want to avoid exposure to the public. By reducing the number of missed visits, telemedicine increases patients' compliance with their care plan and improves health outcomes.

By making regulatory flexibilities and coverage policies permanent, policymakers can protect telemedicine as a lasting tool to promote continuous, efficient and patient-centered health care.

POSITION

The Alliance for Patient Access presents the following suggestions for laws that govern the use of telemedicine:

- 1 Allow telemedicine for a wide range of medical uses.** Policy flexibility during COVID-19 enabled telemedicine for previously uncovered medical purposes. Continuing to allow for broad application of telemedicine could maximize its value to patients and providers.
- 2 Resolve state medical licensure restrictions.** The process for medical licensure must be updated to allow patients access to the clinicians of their choice.
- 3 Remove geographic and site-of-service restrictions for patients and clinicians.** Patients and clinicians must be free to select any private site for conducting a telemedicine visit.
- 4 Maintain parity payment policies for telemedicine.** To continue providing virtual consultations for patients, health care providers must be reimbursed for remote visits at the same rate as for in-person visits.
- 5 Continue to broadly define telemedicine services.** Not all patients have access to hi-speed internet or are comfortable operating a smart phone. By defining telemedicine to include low-tech applications such as audio-only telephone calls where appropriate, lawmakers can allow a broader range of patients to benefit.
- 6 Support connectivity in rural and underserved areas.** Funding that boosts the technical capabilities of underserved communities can improve care by making telemedicine more accessible.