COVID-19 Update: Telehealth Services

Scope: This Provider Alert applies to all HealthChoices contracted providers.

Purpose: To provide an update related to COVID-19 and the delivery of telehealth services.

Behavioral health services are essential services to our members, so Community Care expects our contracted behavioral health providers to continue to serve members throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Providers are expected to notify Community Care, their local county human service offices, and OMHSAS if you anticipate or plan to modify program schedules or admissions to programs due to concerns with COVID-19.

Effectively immediately, Community Care will cover telehealth, including telephonic services, throughout the COVID-19 national state of emergency. Providers must clearly document the mode of communication and maintain all documentation requirements for services rendered. Providers may begin to offer telehealth services immediately for any/all services as a means to continue to offer behavioral health services to HealthChoices members during the COVID-19 crisis. Providers are required to submit their telehealth attestation forms to OMHSAS per the instructions in the OMHSAS memo and attachments listed below, but need not wait for formal approval to begin.

On March 13, 2020 the Trump Administration announced aggressive actions and regulatory flexibilities to help health care providers and states respond to and contain the spread of 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is taking several actions following President Trump’s declaration of a national emergency due to COVID-19.

Among those actions are flexibilities to provide care via telehealth for individuals who are quarantined or self-isolated to limit risk of exposure. CMS indicates that states have broad flexibility to cover telehealth through Medicaid, including the methods of communication (such as telephonic, video technology commonly available on smart phones and other devices) to use.
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On March 15, 2020 OMHSAS issued guidance on the expanded use of telehealth services during the COVID-19 national emergency. Payment for services delivered via telehealth, including telephonic communication, will be made at the same rate as face-to-face interactions. Please refer to the attached OMHSAS Memo and prior OMHSAS Telehealth Bulletin and Provider Attestation form, for further details and instructions.

OMHSAS Memo: Telehealth Guidelines Related to COVID-19

OMHSAS Bulletin 20-02: Guidelines for the Use of Telehealth Technology in the Delivery of Behavioral Health Services

Attachment B: Attestation Form to Provide Telehealth

Telehealth is important not just for people who are unable to go to the doctor, but also for when it is not advisable to go in person. Providers who render telehealth or telephone services as an alternative to traditional face-to-face office-based or mobile services are asked to use their existing fee schedule codes and modifiers applicable to the service being rendered, and populate the "place of service" field on the claim forms submitted to Community Care using the "02" place of service.

When submitting an Attachment B - Attestation Form to Provide Telehealth to RA-PWTBHS@pa.gov for the COVID-19 state of emergency, please also send a copy to Community Care at CCBHProviderSub@upmc.edu.

Providers are encouraged to routinely check Community Care’s website for updates on COVID 19.