

Access to telemedicine services increased

Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has expanded access to telemedicine to ensure the 1.1 million Minnesotans covered by Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare do not lose access to care and services, including mental health and substance use disorder coverage, during the pandemic.

DHS has received federal approval to temporarily ease certain limits in existing law for receiving needed care and services through telephone and video visits that can instead be provided safely and effectively without an in-person face-to-face visit by:

- Expanding the definition of telemedicine to include telephone calls so providers who have a telemedicine agreement in place with DHS can serve patients through telephone or tele-video visits.
- Allowing a provider's first visit with a patient to be conducted over the phone.
- Allowing Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare enrollees to have more than three telemedicine visits in a week.
- Allowing DHS-contracted managed care plans to follow these same policies.

All telemedicine changes are effective Mar. 19, 2020.

DHS received Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services approval for temporarily expanding the providers that may deliver services using telemedicine, including many mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers. This approval also applies to equivalent tribal providers. See the [Temporary coverage of telemedicine visits for Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health providers](#) webpage for information about telemedicine for mental health and SUD.

DHS also received temporary approval to allow a telemedicine service to satisfy the face-to-face requirement under the encounter payment methods for Indian Health Service, Tribal 638 clinic, Federally Qualified Health Center, and Rural Health Clinic services. If a service would have received an encounter payment if performed in person, the same service will receive an encounter payment if performed via telemedicine, including telephone and televideo as long as all of the applicable telemedicine requirements are met.

See the [waivers and modifications](#) webpage or the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) section of the MHCP Provider Manual for more information about requirements that have been waived or modified so together we can continue to provide essential programs and services to Minnesotans safely and without undue delay during the COVID-19 pandemic.