

Telehealth in Medi-Cal

IMPROVING ACCESS AND EQUITY

Telehealth is an effective alternative to many types of in-person care. Video and phone visits offer additional benefits to patients, such as the elimination of transportation barriers and increased accessibility to care during the workday. For individuals without internet or with restrictive data plans, phone visits are especially critical. If these telehealth options are removed or limited, patients could suffer the consequences of delayed care, further widening the disparities gap.

Patient-centered care through the convenience of telehealth is the new standard of care. Medi-Cal must evolve with the rest of the health care industry to achieve health equity for low-income Californians.

“Several of my patients who have multiple chronic conditions experience transportation and mobility challenges to come into the office and do not have access to technology including WiFi to engage in video visits. For these patients, having phone visits is an essential life line to provide continuity of care and address ongoing complex medical issues while eliminating the burden for patients who would have to travel with great difficulty to our clinic to receive care. The value of telephone visits for patients is even more magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic in which my vulnerable patients that are at highest risk for COVID-19 morbidity and mortality are often those that most benefit from the opportunity for telephone visits. Access to telephone visits is essential and imperative to address existing health and social inequities and structural barriers experienced by vulnerable patients that often have high chronic disease burden, transportation and mobility concerns, and insufficient access to technology and WiFi to engage in video visits.” JANE JIH, MD, MPH, MAS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE, DIVISION OF GENERAL INTERNAL MEDICINE, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE MULTIETHNIC HEALTH EQUITY RESEARCH CENTER, UCSF

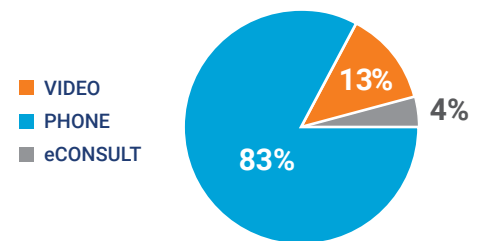
PHONE VISITS ARE ESSENTIAL

Phone visits have provided a critical linkage to care for our patients during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to be an important modality once the public health emergency is over. Since video visits are not an option for many patients, maintaining access to phone visits with adequate payment will be crucial for the health and well-being of our patients and communities.

UC SAN FRANCISCO HEALTH

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, California’s public health care systems dramatically expanded their delivery of video and phone visits. From August 2020 to January 2021, University of California Health, which includes five academic medical centers, provided **an average of 160,781 telehealth visits per month with over 80% conducted by video.**

Telehealth Visits by Type*



*Across University of California Health

We call on the Legislature and Governor to **pass AB 32**, which will ensure that **all Californians have equal access to care through telehealth.**