

Telehealth in Medi-Cal

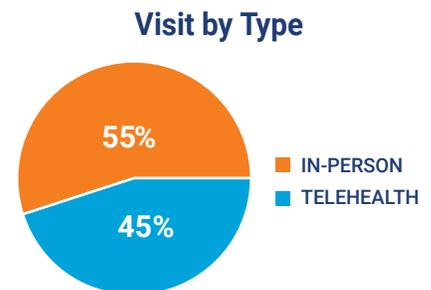
IMPROVING ACCESS AND EQUITY

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 across the industry. Ensuring phone and video visits are available to all Medi-Cal patients will be vital to achieving health equity for low-income Californians.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

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, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Hospitals & Clinics provided an average of 31,500 telehealth visits per month, which was 45% of all patient visits. **Across both primary care and specialty care, over 95% of telehealth visits were by phone.**



“I have a patient who has uncontrolled diabetes and hypertension and has been struggling for years to come to the clinic because she does not have reliable transportation and she is the caretaker for her elderly mother. With telehealth, she has been able to make regular appointments that fit her busy schedule without having to travel by bus for a very long time or worrying about finding respite care for her mother. Telehealth, including video and phone visits, are critical for our patients because they provide more convenient access and reduce barriers to care.” DR. DANA CRUZ, SANTA CLARA

VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

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.

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