

# 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.**

“One of my patients who has cancer and a lung disease and a limited understanding of technology always struggled to come into the office when not feeling well. She needed to take public transit (even an accessible van was tiring) and this increased the risk of COVID-19. She loved the opportunity to have a phone visit because we could check in regularly and quickly start medications to help with symptoms including medication for depression. Access to phone visits are critical because they create opportunities for care and help with health inequities. I got the above patient to do doximity video visits finally so you can transition telephone calls to video. Another patient with renal transplant and difficult to control hypertension needs regular appointments due to acute changes and telephone visits allowed monitoring of her symptoms to help prevent ED visits. She struggled to come in as she needs family to give her a ride and technology is difficult for her so she loves having a scheduled time to talk and review symptoms and next steps. Access to phone visits for her helped keep her blood pressure under control and keep her kidney working better.” MARLENE MILLEN, MD, PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE, CHIEF MEDICAL INFORMATION OFFICER – AMBULATORY, UC SAN DIEGO HEALTH

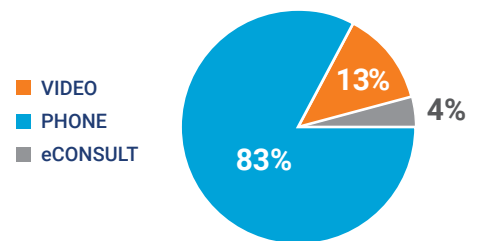
## PHONE VISITS ARE ESSENTIAL

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 DIEGO 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.**