

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 severe autism and fatty liver disease has always struggled to come into the office because of his severe behavioral issues. He is also immunocompromised and not vaccinated so coming into the office poses a risk to his health and to others, like infants, who are not vaccinated and need to come to clinic. His mother, who is his legal guardian and primary caregiver, has loved the opportunity to have a phone visit because we can address almost all of his medical needs through this modality, and he doesn’t experience the stress of coming to clinic, and it’s a much more efficient use of his mother’s time! Access to phone visits are critical because they allow us to provide critical outreach and care to patients who experience structural barriers to medical care or have health or behavioral barriers to accessing care. This is an EQUITY issue and will improve the reach and quality of preventive care we can provide our patients. It reduces moral distress of providers who worry about their patients who cannot come in person and has not negatively impacted vaccination rates or other markers of preventive care. Let’s EMBRACE telehealth for our publicly insured neighbors!”

MARGARET GILBRETH, MD, PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER AND ASSOCIATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR PRIMARY CARE, CHILDREN’S HEALTH CENTER/SFHN

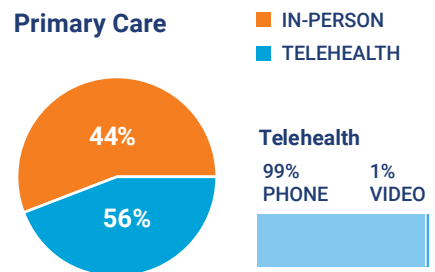
PHONE VISITS ARE ESSENTIAL

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 equivalent reimbursement will be crucial for the health and well-being of our patients and communities.

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, California’s public health care systems dramatically expanded their delivery of video and phone visits. The San Francisco Department of Public Health provides various types of visits through telehealth, from behavioral health to primary care. From August 2020 to January 2021, SFDPH provided an average of **6,851 primary care visits per month through telehealth modalities, with over 99% of primary care telehealth visits conducted by phone.**

Primary Care



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