



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Oklahoma**

TELEMEDICINE GUIDE

Purpose

The purpose of Telemedicine services are meant to help expand specialty health services to rural and underserved areas where there is a lack of specialty expertise locally and to improve health care for all members.

Definitions

Telemedicine- As used in the Oklahoma Telemedicine Act, Section 6802, "telemedicine" means the practice of health care delivery, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, including but not limited to, the treatment and prevention of strokes, transfer of medical data, or exchange of medical education information by means of audio, video, or data communications. Telemedicine is not a consultation provided by telephone or facsimile machine. The Oklahoma State Board of Osteopathic Examiners has published "Guidelines on Telemedicine," while the Oklahoma Board of Medical Licensure and Supervision has promulgated rules specific to telemedicine. The Oklahoma Board of Medical Licensure and Supervision ("OMB") also defines telemedicine specifically to include the treatment and prevention of conditions appropriate to treatment by telemedicine management. However, under the OMB rules, telemedicine excludes internet contact/prescribing and other forms of communication (such as web-based video) that do not meet the equipment requirements described below. Telemedicine is an interactive, real-time encounter with audio and video capability that satisfies the elements required by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) and OMB.

"Physician/patient relationship"- A relationship established when a physician agrees by direct or indirect contact with a patient to diagnose or treat any condition, illness or disability presented by a patient to that physician, whether or not such a presenting complaint is considered a disease by the general medical community. Typically, the physician/patient relationship shall include a medically appropriate, timely-scheduled, actual face-to-face encounter with the patient, subject to any supervisory responsibilities. To be exempt from the face-to-face meeting requirement for purposes of telemedicine, an encounter must satisfy certain criteria, which are set forth below. The act of scheduling an appointment for a future evaluation alone will not establish a physician/patient relationship.

Distant Site – The location of the practitioner providing care at the time of the telemedicine encounter.

Originating Site – The location of the patient at the time of the telemedicine encounter.

Criteria

- An interactive, real-time audio and video communication between the practitioner and the patient.
- A distant-site physician must perform an exam of the patient at the originating site. If the physician deems it medically necessary, the physician may use a licensed healthcare provider who is trained in the use of the equipment at the originating site to "present" the patient, manage the cameras, and perform any physical activities to successfully complete the exam.
- Telemedicine technology must be sufficient to provide the same information to the practitioner as if the exam has been performed in person.
- Telemedicine encounters must comply with HIPAA to ensure all communications and records are secure and confidential.
- A full and complete medical record must be stored and accessible at both the distant and originating sites.

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- The information available to the practitioner must be equivalent in scope and quality to that which would be obtained from a face-to-face encounter.
- The telemedicine encounter must meet all applicable standards of care for the medical problem, including the documentation of a history, a physical exam, the ordering of any diagnostic tests, making a diagnosis and initiating a treatment plan with appropriate discussion and informed consent.
- The telemedicine service must be presented from an originating site located in a rural health professional shortage area or in a county outside of a Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- Approved entities that participate in a Federal telemedicine demonstration project qualify as an originating site regardless of geographical location.
- Telemedicine does not include teleradiology, telepathology, images and/or interpretation of tests that are transmitted electronically, or referral services.
- It is always done with the patient present at the originating site.
- The claim is always submitted to the BCBS plan where the provider is physically located at the time of service.

Eligible originating sites include:

- The office of a physician or practitioner;
- Hospitals including Critical Access Hospitals;
- Rural Health Clinics;
- Federally Qualified Health Centers;
- Hospital-based or CAH-based renal dialysis centers (including satellites); and
- Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC)
- Indian Health Service facility, a Tribal health facility on an Urban Indian clinic (I/T/U).

Eligible “distant site” practitioners include:

- Physicians;
- Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants;
- Licensed Behavioral Health Professionals; (these providers cannot bill for psychotherapy services that include evaluation and management services or for CPT codes 90805, 90807 & 90809); and
- Registered dietitians or nutrition professionals.