



PROVIDER ALERT

Telemental Health Attestation

March 25, 2020

Alert Summary: This alert contains updates on Telemental Health and Virtual Visits related to COVID-19, including temporary changes to attestation requirements.

Dear Provider,

Optum Idaho is taking action to ensure health plan members affected by COVID-19 (coronavirus) have the support and resources they need. In order to make it easier for our members to receive appropriate treatment during this challenging time, we are encouraging providers and members to observe social distancing, isolation and quarantine rules as outlined by the CDC.

Effective immediately, Optum Idaho is expanding our policies around telehealth for network providers to use a wide variety of communication methods to deliver services remotely during the COVID-19 State of Emergency; to the extent it is appropriate for the care of the member.

Providers may continue to use Virtual Visits (HIPAA-approved telehealth technology) to care to Optum Behavioral Health plan members. During the Idaho state of emergency or until further notice, qualified providers may also in good faith consider the use of clinically appropriate audio or video communications technology, consistent with Notice of Enforcement Discretion from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR)ⁱ and guidance from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)ⁱⁱ.*

Additionally, during the Idaho state of emergency when qualified providers do not have access to HIPAA-approved technology or use of audio or video communication technology described in OCR's Notice, and a telephonic visit is clinically appropriate, telephonic services can begin immediately.

During the Idaho state of emergency, providers do not need to attest through the Optum virtual visits process to provide telephonic or telehealth care. However providers will not be listed in the virtual visit provider directory until attestation is completed. Optum Behavioral Health is processing new virtual visit attestations in the order they are received.

Providers must be qualified to render the service regardless of method used. Please refer to reimbursement guidelines below for telehealth billing guidelines as this will allow properly submitted claims to process through auto-adjudication without creating manual work and support timely payment.

The HHS / OCR memo, "Notification of Enforcement Discretion for telehealth remote communications during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency can be found here: [HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) The SAMHSA COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Response and 42 CFR Part 2 Guidance can be found here: [SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

¹The HHS / OCR memo, “Notification of Enforcement Discretion for telehealth remote communications during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency can be found here: [HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) . In part, it provides for the following considerations:

- HIPAA-approved telehealth technologies
- **The following platforms may be considered for use during the Idaho State of emergency:** Popular applications that allow for video chats — including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, or Skype —
 - Providers are encouraged to notify patients that these third-party applications potentially introduce privacy risks, and providers should enable all available encryption and privacy modes when using such applications.
- **These platforms are NOT approved:** Facebook Live, Twitch, Snapchat, TikTok, and similar video communication applications are public facing, and should not be used in the provision of telehealth to Optum Behavioral Health plan members by covered health care providers.

¹ The SAMHSA COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Response and 42 CFR Part 2 Guidance can be found here: [SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

For any questions, please contact your Regional Network Manager.

Thank you,
The Optum Idaho Team
