



April 24, 2020

Re: Expanded Telephone Only Telehealth Services During COVID-19 Crisis

Dear Provider:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana continues to review our telehealth policies in response to medical service needs during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) national emergency.

We are further expanding our telehealth policies for telephone (audio-only) encounters as a replacement for office visits effective for dates of service on and after March 16, 2020. These policies will continue in effect until we are past this crisis.

Expanded telephone only billing guidelines:

Instead of telephone service CPT[®] codes, credentialed network providers are allowed to bill office visit telephone encounters as follows:

- Claims for telehealth services delivered by telephone should include the place of service code typically used by the provider (e.g., 11), along with Modifier GT or 95.
- Doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and chiropractors can bill office visits for new patients using CPT codes 99201-99205. They can bill office visits for established patients using 99211-99215. As a reminder, telephone-only office visits should not include therapy services, as it would be necessary to visually observe the patient.
- Behavioral health specialists (psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed professional counselors and social workers) and registered dietitians can bill using their normal service codes for office visits.

The following criteria also apply:

- Encounters must be fully documented in the patient's medical record.
- Text messages and emails do not meet the complexity of services required for reimbursement.
- Blue Cross will not reimburse calls for the sole purpose of one or two of the following: triaging patients, following up on test results, obtaining referrals to specialists, ordering tests, medication refills, or other minimal services typically handled by physician offices through a routine telephone call.
- As a reminder, effective April 15, 2020, individual members who buy their own healthcare coverage and those who are covered through fully insured groups have \$0 telehealth audio/video or phone-only visits. Self-insured employer groups have the option to waive their members' out-of-pocket costs. Visit the iLinkBlue (www.BCBSLA.com/ilinkblue) message board for the list of self-insured employer groups that are **not** waiving the member cost share.

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Blue Cross will notify providers when the expanded telehealth policies are no longer effective. We will continue to review our telehealth guidelines and update them as new developments occur.

Thank you for working with us to serve our members, especially during this time of uncertainty. Please continue to communicate with Blue Cross as your needs change to meet the COVID-19 crisis. We value you as a key part of our provider networks and the services you bring to our members—your patients.

More Online

Be sure to visit our COVID-19 Provider Resources page, where you can easily access all of our latest provider communications. Go to www.BCBSLA.com/providers, then click on the “COVID-19 Provider Resources” link at the top of the page. We will continue to add updated information to this page as it develops.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about the billing of COVID-19, you may send an email to our Provider Relations Department at provider.relations@bcbsla.com. Please put “COVID-19 Billing” in the subject line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hiral Arges". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hiral Arges
VP, Provider Relations and Contracting
Network Administration

HA/jrm