

Expansion of telehealth in Medicare

ISSUE: Medicare’s physician fee schedule covers a limited set of telehealth services in rural locations. During the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), the Congress and CMS temporarily expanded Medicare’s coverage of telehealth services, to include, for example, services provided to beneficiaries in non-rural areas and in their homes.

KEY POINTS: Providers have responded by rapidly adopting telehealth to provide continued access to health care for their patients during the PHE. Stakeholders are advocating that the Congress and CMS make many of the telehealth expansions permanent after the PHE. A key question is how to achieve the benefits of telehealth while limiting the risks. The Commission began discussing these issues at the September 2020 meeting.

ACTION: The Commission will continue to discuss whether and how to permanently expand telehealth in fee-for-service Medicare.