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Department of Human Services Encourages Medicaid Providers to Use Telemedicine Technology to Mitigate Spread of COVID-19

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Human Services (DHS) has issued guidance to Medicaid-enrolled providers and managed care organizations that encourages the use of telemedicine as a way of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 through reduced person-to-person contact between health professionals and Physical HealthChoices members and fee-for-service beneficiaries, particularly those who are in quarantine or isolation as a result of possible COVID-19 exposure.

“Under rapidly changing circumstances, DHS is acting quickly to accommodate the needs of our Medicaid-enrolled providers who are on the front lines of this crisis,” DHS Secretary Teresa Miller said. “The use of telemedicine is a common-sense example of the flexibility this situation demands. DHS will continue to work together with our Medicaid providers, managed care organizations and partners across all program offices to effectively and safely confront this challenge while continuing to provide services to the millions of Pennsylvanians who depend on us.”

Telemedicine is two-way, real-time interactive communication between the patient and the doctor or other practitioner. The Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP) has supported the use of telemedicine under certain circumstances since 2012.

OMAP’s most recent guidance establishes a preference for the use of telemedicine as a delivery method for medically necessary healthcare services when the patient is quarantined or self-isolated due to exposure or possible risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Telemedicine can be delivered through audio-video conferencing hosted by a secure mobile application. During this state of emergency, telephone-only services may be utilized in situations where video technology is not available.

As a next step, OMAP is encouraging the Physical HealthChoices managed care organizations to work proactively with providers to disseminate information to Medicaid members about the availability and coverage of telemedicine services.

Visit the PA Department of Health’s dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

Guidance to DHS providers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#).

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