

If a conflict arises between a Clinical Payment and Coding Policy (CPCP) and any plan document under which a member is entitled to Covered Services, the plan document will govern. If a conflict arises between a CPCP and any provider contract pursuant to which a provider participates in and/or provides Covered Services to eligible member(s) and/or plans, the provider contract will govern. “Plan documents” include, but are not limited to, Certificates of Health Care Benefits, benefit booklets, Summary Plan Descriptions, and other coverage documents. BCBSTX may use reasonable discretion interpreting and applying this policy to services being delivered in a particular case. BCBSTX has full and final discretionary authority for their interpretation and application to the extent provided under any applicable plan documents.

Providers are responsible for submission of accurate documentation of services performed. Providers are expected to submit claims for services rendered using valid code combinations from Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) approved code sets. Claims should be coded appropriately according to industry standard coding guidelines including, but not limited to: Uniform Billing (UB) Editor, American Medical Association (AMA), Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), CPT® Assistant, Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS), ICD-10 CM and PCS, National Drug Codes (NDC), Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) guidelines, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) Policy Manual, CCI table edits and other CMS guidelines.

Claims are subject to the code edit protocols for services/procedures billed. Claim submissions are subject to claim review including but not limited to, any terms of benefit coverage, provider contract language, medical policies, clinical payment and coding policies as well as coding software logic. Upon request, the provider is urged to submit any additional documentation.

Telemedicine and Telehealth/Virtual Health Care Services Policy

Policy Number: CPCP033

Version 1

Enterprise Clinical Payment and Coding Policy Committee Approval Date: December 1, 2023

Plan Effective Date: March 8, 2024 (Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas Only)

Description

The purpose of the Telemedicine Services and Telehealth/Virtual Health Care Services policy is to provide guidance on payment and coding for services that are provided by an eligible health care professional to a member when neither is present at the same physical location. These services can be performed through various delivery methods. Codes referenced in this policy do not guarantee reimbursement for services.

State and federal regulations define telemedicine and telehealth, however for purposes in understanding the terms in this policy, Telemedicine and Telehealth may be used interchangeably. Virtual health care is used to describe a broader range of services.

The plan reserves the right to request supporting documentation. Failure to adhere to coding and billing policies may impact claims processing and reimbursement. Claims may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

For additional information on telemedicine services or telehealth services or procedures, please check the Plan's website or contact your Network Management Office.

Terms/Descriptions:

Audio only visits- The use of a telephone for visits without video.

Health care professional - A physician or an individual who is licensed, certified or authorized in the Plan's state to perform a health care service; and is authorized to perform a telemedicine service or is authorized to assist a provider in performing a telemedicine service that is delegated and supervised by the physician or a licensed or certified health care professional acting within the scope of the license or certification who does not perform the telemedicine service. Note, eligible providers performing telemedicine services must possess the necessary license to treat members of the Plan's state. Licensed providers must meet the health plans definition of eligible provider.

Live video- Often referred to as real time, a two-way, face-to-face interaction between a member and a provider using audiovisual communications technology.

Physician - A person who is licensed to practice medicine in the Plan's state. Note, eligible providers performing telemedicine services must possess the necessary license to treat members of the Plan's state. Licensed providers must meet the health plans definition of eligible provider.

Telehealth service - The use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support long distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, and health administration. Typically, telehealth describes provider to provider interaction, or indirect provider to patient interaction.

Telemedicine service - The use of a telecommunication system to provide services for the purpose of evaluation and treatment when the patient is at one location and the rendering provider is at another location.

Virtual Health Care- Encompasses care rendered by synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods. Virtual health care is expanding and includes a variety of services and applications using two-way video, email, smart phones, wireless tools, and other forms of telecommunications.

Delivery Methods:

Delivery methods may include but are not limited to the following:

Interactive electronic telecommunications equipment includes audio and video equipment permitting two-way, or live video interactive communication between the member and physician or practitioner. Providers should utilize the appropriate methods for communication service described below depending on the type of service needed and as allowed by state and federal laws. Providers can find the latest guidance on acceptable Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant remote technologies issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights.

- **Synchronous:** 2-way, live interactive audio and video communications and digital video consultations.
- **Asynchronous telecommunication** - Via image and video not provided in real-time (a service is recorded as video or captured as an image; the provider evaluates it later in connection with a synchronous audio interaction between the practitioner and the patient in another location.)
 - **E-Visits-** Allow a member to communicate with a provider using an online patient portal to answer questions or decide if a visit needs to be scheduled.
 - **Mobile health-** Technology used to allow members to review personal health data via mobile devices from their own home and assists in communicating their health status and any changes.
 - **Store and forward** - Technology that stores and transmits or grants access to a member's clinical information for review by a health care professional at a different physical location than the person in connection with a synchronous audio interaction between the practitioner and the patient in another location.
 - **Remote Monitoring Services** - Remote monitoring is a service that enables member's health monitoring as well as transfers the health data to an eligible physician or other qualified health care professional. Additional information for remote monitoring services, and Intraoperative Neurophysiology Monitoring (IONM) services can be found in, and CPCP032 Intraoperative Neurophysiology Monitoring (IONM) Coding and Reimbursement Policy, located on the Plan's website.
 - **Virtual Check-ins-** Remote evaluations of recorded video or images submitted by a member followed by a brief 5-10 minute check-in with a healthcare professional via telephone or other telecommunications device to decide whether an office visit or other service is needed.
- Other methods allowed by state and federal laws, which can allow members to connect with physicians outside of a traditional provider office setting.

Reimbursement Information:

For services appropriately provided through virtual health care, the following requirements must be met for eligible reimbursement, in addition to the requirements applicable to the service being rendered:

- The provider must maintain complete and accurate medical records including but not limited to start and end times of the telemedicine/telehealth or virtual health care service.
- The method of communication must be documented.
- Ensure HIPAA compliant and federal and state privacy laws are implemented for member communications, recordings, and member's records.
- Qualified providers providing telemedicine/telehealth or virtual health care services must possess the necessary license to treat members of the Plan's state.

Billing/Coding:

Modifiers

Modifiers **FQ, FR, G0, GT, GQ, 93** and **95** are telemedicine service or telehealth service modifiers and must be appended to the HCPCS or CPT code, in conjunction with a place of service (POS) code below, on telehealth or telemedicine claims unless a telemedicine procedure code is billed.

Only non- telemedicine procedure codes require the modifier. Additionally, modifier G0 will only be accepted by the Plan when modifier GQ, GT, and/or 95 are appended to the service.

Modifier FQ: The service was furnished using audio-only communication technology.
Modifier FR: The supervising practitioner was present through two-way, audio/video communication technology.
Modifier G0: Telehealth services for diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment, of symptoms of an acute stroke.
Modifier GT: Via interactive audio and video telecommunications systems
Modifier GQ: Via asynchronous telecommunications systems.
Modifier 93: Synchronous telemedicine service rendered via telephone or other real-time interactive audio-only telecommunications system.
Modifier 95: Synchronous telemedicine services rendered via real-time interactive audio and video telecommunications system. Modifier 95 is applicable to certain codes that can be found in AMA, CPT documents. Check current CPT documents for the appendix on CPT Codes That May Be Used for Synchronous Telemedicine Services . These procedures codes are

billed when electronic communication using interactive telecommunications equipment include, at a minimum, audio and video. In addition, codes that are appropriate for use with modifier 95 are indicated with a star (★) throughout the AMA, CPT codebook.

Place of Service (POS) Codes

Telehealth or telemedicine professional claims submitted on a CMS 1500 form must be submitted with Place of Service (POS) Code ‘02’ or ‘10’. Providers should submit the most appropriate place of service code that accurately describes where the services were rendered. POS 02 does **not** apply to originating site facilities when billing a facility fee.

Place of Service (POS) Code 02 (Telehealth Provided Other than in Patient’s Home): The location where health services and health related services are provided or received, through telecommunication technology. Patient is not located in their home when receiving health services or health related services through telecommunication technology.

Place of Service (POS) Code 10 (Telehealth Provided in Patient’s Home): The location where health services and health related services are provided or received, through telecommunications technology. Patient is located in their home (which is a location other than a hospital or other facility where the patient receives care in a private residence) when receiving health services or health related services through telecommunications technology.

See attached [code list](#) for codes for telemedicine and telehealth services eligible for reimbursement.

References:

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Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS)

Policy Update History:

Approval Date	Description
11/9/2020	New policy
12/24/2020	CMS footnote added
02/04/2021	Annual Review, added IOP coverage
03/18/2021	Temporary expanded coverage of telemedicine services effective 1/1/2021 to 12/31/21, language update
3/28/2022	Annual review, updated state specific verbiage, extended coverage date
12/1/2023	Annual Review