

CONNECT for Health Act of 2021

Senators Schatz (D-HI), Wicker (R-MS), Cardin (D-MD), Thune (R-SD), Warner (D-VA), & Hyde-Smith (R-MS)

The CONNECT for Health Act of 2021 promotes higher quality of care, increased access to care, and reduced spending in Medicare through the expansion of telehealth services.

- Numerous studies on telehealth – the use of telecommunications technologies to furnish health care services remotely and in real-time – have shown benefits for quality of care, access to care, and reduced spending.¹
- Telehealth increases access to care in areas with workforce shortages and for individuals who live far away from health care facilities, have limited mobility or transportation, or have other barriers to accessing care.
- However, current statutory restrictions – such as geographic and originating site requirements that only permit beneficiaries to receive telehealth services if they are in certain rural areas and at certain clinical sites – create barriers to coverage that limit the use of telehealth in Medicare.
- Many of these restrictions have been waived during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries during the public health emergency.

The CONNECT for Health Act of 2021 would expand access to telehealth services on a permanent basis, support health care providers and beneficiaries in utilizing telehealth, enhance telehealth oversight, and gather more data on the impact of telehealth.

Summary of the CONNECT for Health Act of 2021

Sec. 1 – Table of contents. Sec. 2 – Findings and sense of Congress.

Title I – Removing Barriers to Telehealth Coverage

Sec. 101 – Provides the HHS Secretary authority to waive telehealth restrictions.

Sec. 102 – Removes geographic restrictions for telehealth services permanently.

Sec. 103 – Expands originating sites to include the home and other appropriate sites.

Sec. 104 – Removes restrictions for emergency medical care services.

Sec. 105 – Requires CMS' process to add telehealth services to better consider how telehealth can improve access to care and allows for the temporary coverage of certain telehealth services to generate evidence of clinical benefit.

Sec. 106 – Permanently allows Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) to furnish telehealth services as distant site providers.

Sec. 107 – Removes restrictions for facilities of the Indian Health Service and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems.

Sec. 108 – Permanently allows for the waiver of telehealth restrictions during public health emergencies.

Sec. 109 – Allows for the use of telehealth in the recertification of a beneficiary for the hospice benefit.

Title II – Program Integrity

Sec. 201 – Clarifies that the provision of technologies to a Medicare beneficiary for the purpose of telehealth services is not considered “remuneration” under fraud and abuse laws.

Sec. 202 – Provides additional resources to the HHS Office of Inspector General for telehealth oversight activities.

Sec. 203 – Requires additional provider and beneficiary education on telehealth, including to support underserved and high-risk populations in utilizing telehealth services.

Title III – Data and Testing of Models

Sec. 301 – Requires a study on telehealth utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sec. 302 – Requires an analysis of the impact of telehealth waivers in CMS Innovation Center models.

Sec. 303 – Authorizes a model to test allowing additional health professionals to furnish telehealth services.

Sec. 304 – Encourages the CMS Innovation Center to test telehealth models in Medicare.

¹ For example: https://www.cchpc.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/HRSA_Cost_Efficiency_Studies.pdf.

The CONNECT for Health Act Is Endorsed By More Than 150 Organizations

AARP
ACT | The App Association
agilon health
Alliance for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
AMDA Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
America's Essential Hospitals
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Diabetes Educators
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Board of Quality Assurance and Utilization Review Physicians
American Clinical Neurophysiology Society
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Health Quality Association
American Heart Association
American Hospital Association
American Lung Association
American Medical Association
American Medical Group Association
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Telemedicine Association
American Urological Association
Americans for Prosperity
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Athenahealth
Atrius Health
Cancer Support Community
Center for Telehealth and e-Health Law
Cerner
Child Neurology Foundation
Children's Health Fund
Children's National Hospital
Cleveland Clinic Health System
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME)
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Connected Health Initiative
Connected Home Living
Consumer Technology Association
Doctor on Demand
Duke Health
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
eHealth Initiative
Electronic Health Record Association
Encounter Telehealth
Endocrine Society
ExamMed
Federation of American Hospitals
Gateway Health Plan
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Global Partnership for Telehealth
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Greater New York Hospital Association
Hackensack Meridian Health
Health Care Transformation Task Force
Health Innovation Alliance
Healthcare Association of Hawaii
Healthcare Leadership Council
HIMSS
InHome Healthcare Services
innovaTel Telepsychiatry
Intel
International OCD Foundation
Invitae
Kaiser Permanente
Lanai Community Health Center
LeadingAge
LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lincare
Lutheran Services in America
Masimo
Medical Group Management Association
Michigan Medicine
Mom Congress and 2020 Mom
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Healthcare Quality
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association for the Support of Long Term Care
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Rural Health Clinics
National Coalition on Health Care
National Council for Hospice and Palliative Care
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Federation of Families
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
National League for Nursing
National MS Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Psoriasis Foundation
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
National Rural Health Association
NCART
Nemours Children's Health System
NMHM - No Health without Mental Health
Northwell Health
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association
OCHIN
Ochsner Health System
Oncology Nursing Society
Partnership to Advance Virtual Care
Personal Connected Health Alliance
Philips
Providence Health
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
PursueCare
REDC Consortium
Remote Cardiac Services Provider Group
Renal Physicians Association
Society of General Internal Medicine
Teladoc Health
Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA)
Texas Health Information Management Association
The MAVEN Project
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
TouchPointCare
Tourette Association of America
Transformational Healthcare Initiative
Treatment Communities of America
U.S. COPD Coalition
United Spinal Association
University of Hawaii System
University of Mississippi Medical Center, Center for Telehealth
UPMC Health System
UVA Health
Wisconsin Hospital Association