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**July 20, 2020**

*Welcome to America's Physician Groups' "Healthcare on the Hill," where you can get the latest on healthcare happenings in our nation's capital--and with a special focus on the value-based care movement.*

*As our nation--and the world--continues to face the many challenge presented by COVID-19, we are working to ensure you have the very latest information on the virus and our rapidly changing healthcare landscape.*

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**Valinda Rutledge**  
**Senior Vice President of Federal Affairs**  
**America's Physician Groups**

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#### **Audio-Only Telehealth Bill Introduced in the House of Representatives**

Last week, Representative Terri Sewell (D-AL) introduced a [bill](#) in the House of Representatives that would require the inclusion of diagnoses made through audio-only in the determination of Risk Adjustment for Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. The bill follows months of advocacy from APG on the need to recognize audio-only telehealth services in MA for Risk Adjustment, including correspondence with [the Department of Health and Human Services](#), [Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services](#), and [the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions](#). APG will continue to build on

the resulting momentum and push for changes through regulation and legislation.

### **House Ways and Means Committee Release Plan to Further Telehealth Services**

Today, a group of Republicans on the House Ways and Means Committee released a plan to expand telehealth services. The plan outlines how the committee plans to move forward with making telehealth services, including audio-only as permanent, lift restrictions to allow for more access to telehealth services, waive limitations for certain physician groups to broaden telehealth access for Medicare patients, permanently allow HSA eligible plans to cover telehealth deductibles, and permanently allow for remote dialysis care. You can view their “discussion draft” [here](#).

### **CMS Administrator Seema Verma Authors Blog on Telehealth Expansion**

In a [blog](#) published last week, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Seema Verma discussed the impact of telehealth expansion on access to care for beneficiaries and the resulting possibilities for continuing these expanded policies past the current public health emergency. Considering the ongoing pandemic, CMS has expanded telehealth policies to:

- Allow all Medicare beneficiaries across the country to receive telehealth services from any location, including their homes
- Add 135 allowable services
- Expand the types of health care providers that can offer telehealth

Administrator Verma stated that as a result of data showing the importance of telehealth as a source of care across the country and the immediate uptake in its usage, CMS is reviewing the temporary changes and assessing which should be made permanent through regulatory action. The agency will look at the impact of the changes on access to care, health outcomes, Medicare spending, and impact on the health care delivery system itself. CMS will be assessing appropriate Medicare payment rates for telehealth services as well as how to protect beneficiaries from fraudulent activities.

APG has been actively advocating to make the changes in telehealth flexibilities permanent in [correspondence](#) to both CMS and Congress, asking for the necessary regulatory and legislative changes needed to expand telehealth services nationwide. We will continue to monitor developments and communicate the importance of this growing sector in healthcare.

### **HHS Announced an Additional \$10 billion to Hospitals in Covid-19**

On Friday, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) that Hospitals in the hardest hit areas and those that have reported up to 161 COVID-19 admissions from January 1 to June 10, are now eligible to receive an additional \$10 billion in provider relief funding with approximately \$50,000 for each admission. Alex Azar, HHS

Secretary stated that “The top priority for HHS’s administration of the Provider Relief Fund has been getting support as quickly as possible to providers who have been hit hard by COVID-19. “Because we’ve carefully targeted support, we can make payments to areas most in need as the pandemic evolves, like we are doing with this round of funds.”

APG continues our advocacy in Washington with Congressional leaders and the Administration for additional provider relief funding for physician practices that are also hard hit by the recent COVID-19 surge.

### **CMS Provides Snapshot on QPP Participation**

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) updated its [Quality Payment Program Participation Status Tool](#) with new data provided by APM’s. The update includes Medicare Part B claims data from service between from January 1 to the end of March. Providers who are qualified as APM’s are eligible to receive a 5 percent incentive bonus and are exempt from participating in MIPS. For more information, visit the [Advanced APMs webpage](#) on the [QPP website](#).

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