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AAP News

AAP urges insurers to extend telehealth payments during COVID-19 pandemic

Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/01/28/coronavirus>.

The AAP is urging insurance companies and Medicaid programs to continue paying for telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With expanded coverage and increased payment, telehealth has become a vital way for pediatricians to care for patients, but some carriers plan to stop coverage later this month.

"Telemedicine has played a critical role in expanding access to care for many patients, including those who live in rural areas or in areas without access to reliable public transportation during the pandemic," said AAP President Sara "Sally" H. Goza, M.D., FAAP. "Those needs will not end in June. Nor will the needs of children with complex medical conditions, for whom the ability to interact with pediatric subspecialists and pediatric surgeons to guide their follow-up care is critical for their long-term health."

A recent Kaiser Family Foundation [study](#) found that nearly 50% of families have skipped or put off health care during the pandemic. As the need for health care services builds, there likely will be a surge of patients seeking care. Telehealth will serve as a critical expansion of the pediatrician's office to support this influx.

"Even though states are starting to open up, families are still frightened to come out," said Sandy L. Chung, M.D., FAAP, a pediatrician in Fairfax, Va., and president of the AAP Virginia Chapter. "In our area, the coverage for telehealth visits will expire for several of the insurance companies we work with, and we're afraid this will lead to many families delaying health care even longer."

The AAP is calling for private insurance and Medicaid payments to continue for at least 90 days after the public health emergency declaration expires.

"It is urgent that insurance companies recognize this need and continue the expansion of telemedicine policies that were established during this crisis, so all children can have access to the health care they need now," Dr. Goza said.

Resources

- [AAP tools and resources on telehealth](#)
- [AAP webinar on telehealth](#)
- [AAP News story "How to code for COVID-19 diagnosis, testing, telehealth"](#)
- [More information on coding for COVID-related encounters, including an FAQ](#)
- [AAP Guidance: Telehealth Payer Policy in Response to COVID-19](#)
- [AAP News story "How to provide good care using telehealth and reduce medical liability risks"](#)
- [AAP's "Guidance on the Necessary Use of Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#)
- [COVID-19 related state telehealth policy changes](#)