

Statement on Medicare Beneficiary Access to Therapy Telehealth Services After the Public Health Emergency Expires

Providers and rehabilitation professionals are calling on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide clarification of beneficiary access to physical and occupational therapy and speech-language pathology services via telehealth when furnished by institutional providers upon the expiration of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) on May 11th.

Although Section 4113 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (P.L. 117-328) directed CMS to extend the beneficiary access to therapy services furnished via telehealth services initiated during the PHE through the end of 2024, the agency has not provided specific guidance to ensure that beneficiaries will continue to have access to these services when furnished by an institutional provider such as a hospital outpatient therapy department, skilled nursing facility, home health agency or outpatient rehabilitation facility.

Per the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, sixty-three percent of Medicare outpatient therapy services are furnished by institutional providers. This uncertainty of benefit eligibility and absence of billing guidance prior to the expiration of the PHE means that many seniors may have necessary care interrupted, have the initiation of care delayed, or be denied access to therapy care entirely, especially in rural and underserved areas.

We urge CMS to address this situation immediately, and we urge members of Congress to ask the agency to provide clear guidance on the legislation enacted that was intended to assure seamless beneficiary access to therapy services via telehealth through 2024.

ADVION (formerly the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care)
Alliance for Physical Therapy Quality and Innovation
American Health Care Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
APTA Private Practice
National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies