



COVID-19 Telehealth Resources for SC patients and providers

Updated on 3/30/2020

In today's environment, it is important for patients to feel safe and secure as they seek medical advice and assistance. Palmetto Care Connections is working to educate patients and providers on the role that telehealth can play in combating COVID 19.

Palmetto Care Connections joins the National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers, the Center for Connected Health Policy, the South Carolina Telehealth Alliance, the South Carolina Hospital Association, the South Carolina Office of Rural Health and many other partners in promoting telehealth resources to help impact the current situation.

Our staff is available to help providers set up virtual platforms so that patients can adhere to the recommendations of social distancing and staying at home. If you are a rural health care provider who is interested in implementing a telehealth platform and you have questions about set up, licensure, reimbursement or general information about telehealth, please contact us at telehealthsupport@palmettocareconnections.org or call Kathy Schwarting at 803-707-2378.

The following is a list of resources that patients and health care providers can use to get current information about Telehealth and COVID-19.

South Carolina COVID-19 Updates

For most up to date information on the status of COVID-19 in South Carolina, please visit the [South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control](#) website.

National COVID-19 Updates

For current information about COVID-19 in the United States, visit [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

COVID-19 Online Screening

For patients with COVID-19 symptoms (respiratory infection, fever, cough, flu-like symptoms) or known exposure, please complete a Virtual Urgent Care visit to receive consultation and determine whether further testing is appropriate. In order to access the free consult, use the promo code COVID19.

- [MUSC Health Virtual Urgent Care](#)
- [McLeod Telehealth](#)
- [Prisma Health Virtual Visit](#)
- [Roper St. Francis Healthcare Virtual Care](#)

Also, [Self Regional Healthcare](#) is offering telephone screening. Call the COVID-19 Screening Line at 864-725-4500.

COVID-19 Telehealth FAQs for SC Providers:

For any providers getting started with telehealth, the National Telehealth Resource Center Consortium's [COVID-19 technical assistance document](#) is helpful.

As things rapidly develop on both what we know about COVID-19, policies around telehealth have also been developing alongside of it. This fact sheet includes a summary of what is covered by various public and private payers with the information that has been released. Keep in mind that events are evolving and to consider this a living document that could change frequently as new information and new policies become available/are enacted. [Telehealth Coverage Policies in the Time of COVID-19 to Date – UPDATED 3.19.20](#)

Under President Trump's leadership, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened access to Medicare telehealth services so that beneficiaries can receive a wider range of services from their doctors without having to travel to a healthcare facility. These policy changes build on the regulatory flexibilities granted under the President's emergency declaration. CMS is expanding this benefit on a temporary and emergency basis under the 1135 waiver authority and Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act.

[Medicare Telemedicine Health Care Provider Fact Sheet](#)

Telehealth Policies and Laws

- All SC practitioners should be familiar with South Carolina's [SC Telemedicine Act \(S1035\)](#)
- Non-physician practitioners should be aware of additional guidelines or laws for their field. Please reach out to your respective licensing body for guidance.
- For current South Carolina state laws and reimbursement policies go to the [Center for Connected Health Policy](#). For current state and federal laws as of 3.19.2020, please see this CCHP presentation entitled [Telehealth & COVID-19: Policy](#).

Recent Update:

- The President signed into law HR 748, the **Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act or “CARES Act”**. The \$2 trillion relief package not only provides economic relief but also funding for health care, including some telehealth items. One of the most significant is allowing Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) in this emergency period to be a distant site provider for a telehealth service covered by Medicare. However, these services will be paid an amount calculated from the fee-for-service schedule, not the prospective payment system. Learn more about the expanded coverage from [mHealth Intelligence](#).

Telehealth platforms for providing telehealth services to patients in their homes

- There are multiple HIPAA compliant video platforms available. Palmetto Care Connections recommends Vidyo, a video conferencing platform used to enable a telehealth consult between a provider and a patient at home. For more information, contact Palmetto Care Connections at telehealthsupport@palmettocareconnections.org or call Kathy Schwarting at 803-707-2378.
- Another web-based video platform often used by SC Telehealth Alliance partners is [doxy.me](#).
- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a **Notification of Enforcement Discretion for Telehealth**, which allows providers to use platforms such as Skype, Facebook Messenger, and Apple FaceTime for provision of telehealth services during this national emergency. Please review the notification as **certain public-facing platforms are still excluded**.

Reimbursement for Telehealth services to patients in their homes

- After passing in both the House and Senate, the President signed into law HR 748, the **Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act or “CARES Act”**. The \$2 trillion relief package not only provides economic relief but also funding for health care, including some telehealth items. One of the most significant is allowing Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) in this emergency period to be a distant site provider for a telehealth service covered by Medicare. However, these services will be paid an amount calculated from the fee-for-service schedule, not the prospective payment system. Learn more about the expanded coverage in this article from [mHealth Intelligence](#).
- The telehealth reimbursement landscape is **quickly changing** as restrictions are being temporarily lifted in light of the COVID-19 crisis. To receive ongoing telehealth coverage and policy updates, we encourage everyone to visit the [Center for Connected Healthcare Policy’s website](#) and sign up for their listserv.

- Medicare: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened telehealth reimbursement for Medicare beneficiaries for the duration of the COVID 19 crisis. Please reference the [Medicare Fact Sheet](#) released 3/17/20 for more information, and monitor the [CMS Newsroom](#) for up-to-date changes.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield: BCBSSC does cover some telehealth visits into the home upon completion of virtual care services application [see [telemedicine \(CAM 032\) and telehealth \(CAM 176\) policies](#)]. Policies around telehealth are likely to be lightened due to COVID-19. To stay up-to-date please reference the [BCBSSC website](#).
- Medicaid: [SC DHHS](#) is working on a COVID-19 action plan and will post any changes to its policies publicly on its website.
- The [SC Department of Insurance](#) has a dedicated page its website that focuses on insurance industry developments in South Carolina pertaining to COVID-19

In the midst of the current COVID-19 environment, please join Palmetto Care Connections and our partners in continuing to identify solutions including telehealth to address the challenges.