

Kansas Advocacy Issue

Make Telehealth Flexibilities Permanent

Action Needed

Telehealth is allowing Kansans to manage their health in ways that work around their schedules, obligations and locations. However, there are major barriers to making telehealth a widespread and widely accepted method of care.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has seen an explosion of telehealth utilization as providers worked to provide care to patients without risking exposure to illness. Kansans have become accustomed to the convenience of telehealth services in both rural and urban areas of the state. The telehealth flexibilities initiated to maintain access through the Medicare program have made it possible for providers of all types to offer their patients telehealth services. Unfortunately, there are still barriers to the wide adoption of telehealth care.

The first barrier is Medicare's limitations on coverage and payment for many services. KHA appreciates the short-term extension of the Medicare flexibilities passed in the 2022 omnibus bill. However, making them permanent would be a significant win for both patients and providers.

Second, Kansas is facing a behavioral health crisis. Access to behavioral health services is limited in many parts of the state. Hospitals face waiting hours or days for behavioral health patients in crisis to receive placement in facilities. Access to telehealth would provide care to patients before they reach crisis levels and need institutional care.

Finally, providers still have issues with access to adequate broadband services. Improving broadband services in rural Kansas communities would benefit not only the health care industry but also education, government and the health care industry.

Bottom Line:
By making telehealth flexibilities permanent, Kansans will be able to connect to their provider regardless of distance leading to better physical and behavioral outcomes.



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