

Telehealth Updates and Best Practices Amid COVID-19

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Presentation: Telehealth Updates and Best Practices Amid COVID-19

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This webinar will explore the shifting telehealth landscape amid COVID-19, which the World Health Organization characterized as a pandemic and which the United States declared a public health emergency that has prompted the need for greater flexibility in healthcare delivery and enhanced access to providers. Needless to say, it has also led many behavioral healthcare providers and addiction treatment providers to consider synchronous telehealth (i.e. real-time video conferencing) to enable delivery of services in a “socially distanced” manner that is safer for all.

As background, we will revisit key terms and concepts underlying the lawful use of telehealth before the pandemic, including but not limited to informed consent, standard of care, “synchronous” vs. “asynchronous”, “originating site” vs. “distant site”, and restrictions on prescribing drugs.

Within the past few months, certain of these requirements have been relaxed by authorities including but not limited to state agencies; the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services’ (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR), with respect to HIPAA; the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), with respect to prescribing; and by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and other payors, with respect to reimbursement.

Importantly, we will explore telehealth best practices amid COVID with respect to privacy, quality of care, and more, including the propriety of telehealth in certain circumstances even amid relaxed rules. Lastly, we will consider the likelihood that this telehealth transformation will remain post-COVID.

Specifically, we will tackle the following areas and questions:

- An overview of the telehealth landscape pre-COVID-19, including key terms and concepts such as informed consent, standard of care, “synchronous” vs. “asynchronous,” “originating site” vs. “distant site,” requirements with respect to prescribing and documentation, and more.
- Changes within the past few months in response to the COVID-19 crisis by:
 - States (with focus on California);
 - HHS’s OCR, with respect to HIPAA;
 - the U.S. DEA, with respect to prescribing;
 - CMS and other payors;
 - and more.
- Concerns regarding privacy, standard of care, reimbursement, and more amid these relaxed requirements
- Best practices and recommendations in response to these concerns (e.g., using Zoom for AA meetings)
- Will these relaxed rules remain after the COVID-19 crisis has passed?