



JENNIFER KENT  
DIRECTOR

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
Department of Health Care Services



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

DATE: December 1, 2015 PPL NO. 15-024  
TO: Local Educational Agencies  
SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF TELEHEALTH FOR SPEECH THERAPY SERVICES IN THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY MEDI-CAL BILLING OPTION PROGRAM

This Policy and Procedure Letter (PPL) notifies Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) participating in the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program that effective July 1, 2016, the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program will allow LEAs to bill for covered speech therapy assessment and treatment services when performed via telemedicine.

The Telehealth Advancement Act of 2011 (Business and Professions Code § 2290.5) defines telehealth as the mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient's health care while the patient is at the originating site and the health care provider is at a distant site. As specified in the Medicine: Telehealth section of the Medi-Cal Provider Manual (medne tele), the definition of telemedicine is the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another using interactive telecommunications equipment that includes, at a minimum, audio and video equipment permitting two-way, real-time, interactive communication between the student and physician or practitioner at the distant site to improve a student's health.

Effective July 1, 2016, speech-language assessment services and speech therapy treatment services, as defined in the Speech Therapy section of the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program Provider Manual (loc ed serv spe) when performed via telemedicine, may be reimbursed to LEAs when provided to Medi-Cal eligible students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP). In order to bill for telemedicine speech services, all of the following conditions must be met, as specified, in part, in the bulleted elements in the Medicine: Telehealth section of the Medi-Cal Provider Manual (medne tele):

- A telemedicine service must use interactive audio, video or data communication to qualify for reimbursement. The qualified service must be in real-time or near real-time (delay in seconds or minutes) to qualify as an interactive two-way transfer of medical data and information between the student and health care provider. Medi-Cal does not reimburse for telephone calls, electronic mail messages or facsimile transmissions.
- The audio-video telemedicine system used must, at a minimum, have the capability of meeting the procedural definition of the CPT-4 code provided through telemedicine. Following implementation, these CPT-4 codes will be included in the *loc ed serv spe* section of the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program provider manual. The telecommunication equipment must be of a quality to adequately complete all necessary components to document the level of service for the CPT-4 code billed.
- The supervising health care provider who has the ultimate responsibility for the care of the student must be a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist or a Speech-Language Pathologist with a valid Professional Clear Services Credential in the State of California, must be employed or contracted by a LEA enrolled as a Medi-Cal provider, and must be individually involved with patient care and accept responsibility for the actions of the credentialed speech-language pathologist under his or her supervision. **The provider performing services via telemedicine**, whether in California or out of state, **must be a California licensed Speech-Language practitioner** and/or credentialed Speech-Language Pathologist as defined in the Speech Therapy section of the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program Provider Manual.
- The health care provider at the originating site must first obtain oral consent from the student's parent or legal guardian prior to providing service via telehealth and shall document oral consent in the student's medical record, including the following:
  - A description of the risks, benefits and consequences of telemedicine
  - The student's parent or legal guardian retains the right to withdraw the student at any time
  - All existing confidentiality protections apply, including HIPAA requirements
  - The student's parent or legal guardian has access to all transmitted medical information

- No dissemination of any student images or information to other entities without further written consent
- All medical information transmitted during the delivery of health care via telemedicine must become part of the student's medical record maintained by the licensed health care provider.

Telemedicine speech therapy services will be reimbursable when performed according to telemedicine guidelines and when billed with modifier GT (service rendered via interactive audio and telecommunications systems) and the appropriate CPT-4 code. The LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program Provider Manual will be updated to reflect the current rates for the CPT codes.

If you have questions concerning this PPL, please contact Mr. Rick Record, Chief, LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program, by phone at (916) 552-9222 or by e-mail at [Rick.Record@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:Rick.Record@dhcs.ca.gov)

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY MICHELLE KRISTOFF**

Michelle Kristoff, Chief  
Medi-Cal Administrative Claiming Section