



Telehealth Resource Guide

A Marylander's Guide to Telehealth for Behavioral Health Services During COVID-19

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has released guidance for providers, as well as a [comprehensive and interactive telehealth map](#) outlining known behavioral health providers now offering telehealth services across the state.

What is telehealth?

“Telehealth” is a mode of delivering health care services through the use of telecommunications technology by a health care practitioner to a patient in a different physical location. It does not include audio-only messages, emails, or fax transmissions.

“Telephonic communication” refers to audio-only interactions between a health care practitioner and a patient.

What has changed about telehealth in Maryland?

In an effort to keep patients and health care workers safe, the state of emergency as a result of COVID-19 temporarily expanded the telehealth services available to Marylanders.

On March 17, 2020, the Secretary of Health temporarily expanded the definition of telehealth to ensure individuals can access certain Medicaid-covered health care services in their own home to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

On March 20, 2020, the Governor issued an executive order to authorize the reimbursement of audio-only health care services and to grant further flexibility regarding the use of HIPAA-compliant telehealth technology during the state of emergency.

This expansion will remain in place until further notice by MDH.

What about privacy?

BHA prefers the technology to be HIPAA compliant technology. HIPAA, or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, protects the privacy and security of protected health information. For privacy reasons as well as the quality of treatment, traditional telehealth technology is strongly preferred. The Department of Health and Human Services has relaxed enforcement of strict HIPAA standards in order to allow providers to use “non-public facing” apps to provide telehealth.

What apps are permitted?

Non-public-facing apps are permitted. These include Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, Zoom, and Skype. These and similar applications ensure that you know who is participating in a call.

Public-facing applications are not permitted because there is no way of determining who is able to view your communication. These include Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok, Snapchat and similar video communication applications.

Voice telephone may be used during the emergency only if you are not able to access true telehealth services.

What else do I need to know?

The provider will require your consent, which may be given verbally if written consent is not possible. The provider must also inform you if the technology you plan to use is not HIPAA compliant.

Where can I learn more?

Most providers in the Maryland Public Behavioral Health System have adopted the use of telehealth or telephone to provide services, and services can be accessed by calling them directly.

If you do not have direct contact with an agency already, some providers of telehealth are identified our interactive telehealth map: telebehavioralhealth-maryland.hub.arcgis.com