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Taskforce on Telehealth Invites Public Input

Website established, virtual town hall planned to solicit comments on future telehealth policy.

The multi-stakeholder Taskforce on Telehealth Policy is seeking input from the public as it develops policy recommendations to advance quality and patient experience while establishing a stable, long-term environment that fosters the growth and integration of remote services within the healthcare system.

The taskforce is being convened by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), the Alliance for Connected Care, and the American Telemedicine Association (ATA). Members include a broad spectrum of quality experts, consumer advocates, providers and health plans. Most recently, former US Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin joined the panel. Click here to see a full list of taskforce members.

"This taskforce seeks to represent healthcare providers, plans, consumer advocates and experts from the public, private and non-profit sectors, creating consensus recommendations for policymakers on the safe, effective, and efficient adoption of telehealth," added Ann Mond Johnson, CEO, the ATA. "We urge all telehealth stakeholders to share their insights."

"We have an incredible group of healthcare leaders who have volunteered their time to the taskforce. A public comment period will allow us to hear from even more stakeholders and benefit from different perspectives," said NCQA President Margaret O'Kane.

"The work of this taskforce is dependent on an understanding of how telehealth is being used across the healthcare continuum, and the ideas people have for making it long-lasting," said Alliance for Connected Care Executive Director Krista Drobac. "The more we hear from interested stakeholders, the better."

Members of the public will be able to submit comments in response to the questions below from Wednesday, June 24 at 12 PM EST through Wednesday, July 8. Taskforce conveners will host a live town hall at the close of the public comment period as an additional vehicle for receiving input.

The Taskforce on Telehealth will hold its first meeting on Monday, June 29 and deliberate through the summer. Final recommendations will be issued in early September.

Questions for Taskforce on Telehealth Policy Public Comment

To expedite and focus the Taskforce's work, we will create three subgroups on cost, program integrity and quality. The subgroup deliberations will inform higher-level questions for full Taskforce evaluation.

Expanding Telehealth and its Effect on Total Cost of Care: *Before COVID, policymakers often assumed that expanding telehealth would increase costs.*
- What have we learned about telehealth utilization during the pandemic?
- How should federal budgeting models adapt to reflect expanded telehealth access?
- What is needed to determine the effect of telehealth expansion on prevention, urgent care, post-acute care, etc.?
- What principles should inform telehealth pay vs. in-person care and do these vary by service/mode of telehealth?

Enhancing Patient Safety and Program Integrity in Remote Care Services: *Patient safety concerns drove some pre-COVID telehealth restrictions.*
- What do data tell us about program integrity with telehealth vs. in-person care?
- How can telehealth/virtual care technologies be used to enhance program integrity?
- How does your organization address program integrity with telehealth/virtual care and does it differ from in-person care?
- What best practices should payers implement to optimize program integrity to prevent fraud and abuse?
- What do data tell us about patient safety with telehealth vs. in-person care?
- Are there opportunities for greater levels of patient safety in telehealth?
- What controls are needed to prevent diversion of controlled substances prescribed via telehealth?
- How can we best protect patient privacy while ensuring interoperable telehealth access that enables effective payer-provider collaboration?

Data Flow, Care Integration and Quality Measurement: *Telehealth was often seen as separate rather than part of core care.*
- How do we fully leverage telehealth capabilities throughout the care and quality ecosystems?
- What are barriers to a more integrated quality measurement system, data sharing and patient-centered care for remote services?
- What are best ways to assess the impact of telehealth expansion on quality and patient experience?
- How do we adapt the quality infrastructure to incorporate and support telehealth expansion and strengthen its infrastructure?
- What has your experience been with consumer telehealth satisfaction and they would accept virtual care in an integrated care system?
- How might policies encourage patients and providers to view of telehealth as another kind of care vs. a different care modality?

Broader Policy Questions
- What should criteria be for which emergency regulatory changes to keep vs. default to pre-COVID rules?
- What role can federal and state policy play in giving patients and providers tools and technical assistance to meet telehealth needs?
- What have we learned during the pandemic that can be applied to policy on access, quality, safety, cost effectiveness, and outcomes?