

Congress Introduces...

Improving Telehealth for Underserved Communities Act

H.R. 6792 Allows RHCs to be Paid AIR for Telehealth Visit

On May 8th, Representative Adrian Smith (R-NE) and Representative Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ) introduced the Improving Telehealth for Underserved Communities Act.

The National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) strongly endorses this legislation and we sincerely thank Rep. Smith and Rep. O'Halleran for their leadership on this issue. Both members were instrumental in getting the law changed to allow rural health clinics (RHCs) and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) to bill as distant site providers, and now they are leading the way on improving our deeply problematic telehealth billing methodology.

- The [Improving Telehealth for Underserved Communities Act](#) is narrowly tailored to address the flawed reimbursement methodology created by CMS in April. It would allow RHCs to be paid their full all-inclusive rate (AIR) for distant site telehealth visits. Furthermore, this legislation would require that telehealth visits be treated the same as in-person visits for cost reporting purposes. These changes would dramatically simplify and improve telehealth for RHCs and FQHCs.
- The current telehealth visit payment methodology for RHCs and FQHCs will result in a difficult recoupment period in July, whereby most RHCs and all FQHCs will be required to pay back money to Medicare for every telehealth visit provided. It is also a convoluted system that will result in wildly inaccurate claims data and an incredible amount administrative burden for our safety-net providers.
- Thankfully, in crafting the legislation, Rep. Smith and Rep. O'Halleran recognized that the current telehealth payment methodology only highlights how underpaid independent RHCs are by Medicare. As such, the legislation also raises the RHC cap or "upper-limit" to \$92.03 up from \$86.31 so independent RHCs are not disadvantaged by the policy.
- We need all RHCs to call their Members of Congress and ask them to support this legislation if we want to include this vital fix in the next COVID-19 package. Now is the time to do your part to fix telehealth! Visit <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> to get your representative's contact information.

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