

11-17-25 Weekly Clinical Update

With the government shutdown over, at least temporarily, the issue of Medicare telehealth services is somewhat clarified. The legislation extends Medicare telehealth waivers through January 30, 2026. For the long-term care profession, this extension allows operators and residents the ability to continue telehealth visits for specialist consultations, behavioral health services, and routine check-ups as were previously allowed, and frequently used, especially in rural areas that lacked necessary services. These services were enacted retroactively to October 1, 2025 through January 30, 2026. The key provisions include:

- No geographic or originating site restrictions: beneficiaries can receive telehealth services from any location, including their home or nursing facility, regardless of urban/rural status
- Home as originating site: Explicitly maintained for non-behavioral and behavioral health visits, crucial for frail nursing home residents who may struggle with transport
- Audio-only flexibilities: Allowed for certain services, benefiting elderly patients with limited broadband or tech savvy
- Expanded provider eligibility: Federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, and a broader range of practitioners including therapists, nurse practitioners, can continue billing as distant sites
- Frequency limitation waivers: Removed for subsequent nursing facility visits, inpatient follow-ups, and critical care consultations—directly easing burdens on SNF providers
- Retroactive reimbursement: Claims held during the lapse are expected to be processed under the restored rules, minimizing financial hits to providers

Although this extension is good news for residents and for facilities, the extension is for a very limited time period. Advocates are pushing to make this permanent, which is especially good for nursing facilities, especially with the emphasis of care on behavioral health services, and the extremely limited number of behavioral health practitioners.

Congressional bills still pending as of November 14, 2025 related to telehealth services: (Make your voice heard about the importance of these services!)

🔗 H.R. 5081 / S. 2709 – Telehealth Modernization Act (bipartisan, would extend/permanent some flexibilities)

🔗 H.R. 4206 / S. 1261 – CONNECT for Health Act (broader permanent reforms)

None have passed yet, and no new CR restoring the waivers has been enacted.

Resources:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/telehealth-faq-updated-10-15-2025.pdf>

<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/telehealth-policy/telehealth-policy-updates>

<https://telehealthresourcecenter.org/resources/the-telehealth-policy-cliff-preparing-for-october-1-2025/>

<https://skillednursingnews.com/2025/10/government-shutdown-leads-to-nursing-home-survey-contingency-plans-limits-telehealth/>