



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Behavioral Health

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 20, 2020

TO: Licensed Mental Health Professionals (LMHPs)

FROM: Karen Stubbs Church, J.D.
Assistant Secretary

RE: Behavioral Health Services via Telemedicine/Telehealth by LMHPs

Outpatient specialized behavioral health services delivered by licensed mental health professionals (LMHPs) are provided as part of a comprehensive specialized psychiatric program available to Medicaid eligible children and adults with behavioral health needs. Services must be medically necessary to promote the maximum reduction of symptoms and restoration to both child and adult recipients. To be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement in Louisiana, this includes services provided by fully licensed mental health practitioners within their scope of practice, including:

- Psychiatrists;
- Medical Psychologists;
- Licensed Psychologists;
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs);
- Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs);
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs);
- Licensed Addiction Counselors (LACs); and
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) with a psychiatric specialization.

In light of the COVID-19 declared emergency, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) acknowledges the need for the continued facilitation of outpatient behavioral health services. When clinically appropriate, LDH encourages LMHPs to facilitate services via telemedicine/telehealth. The following services are currently allowed via telemedicine/telehealth:

- individual psychotherapy;
- family psychotherapy; and
- medication management services (for prescribers).

Although use of a *combined* audio **and** video telecommunication system is preferred when available, LMHPs are allowed to utilize an interactive audio-only system (e.g., telephone), without the requirement of video, when necessary. When using an audio-only system, the need and rationale for employing an audio-only system must be documented in the clinical record.

For these services, providers must bill the procedure code (CPT code) with modifier “95,” as well as Place of Service “02,” when delivering the service through telemedicine/telehealth. Reimbursement for visits delivered via telemedicine/telehealth is similar to in-person visits, subject to any terms and conditions in provider contracts with Medicaid managed care entities. Providers should contact their contracted managed care entities for information that may affect billing procedures and reimbursement rates. There is currently no formal limitation on the originating site (i.e., where the patient is located) and this can include, but is not limited to, a healthcare facility, school, or the patient’s home. Regardless of the originating site, providers must maintain adequate medical documentation to support reimbursement of the visit. Providers offering services via telemedicine/telehealth must also adhere to all telemedicine-related requirements of their professional licensing board.

Please note, effective **March 20, 2020**, LDH is issuing approval for LMHPs to utilize telemedicine/telehealth for conducting behavioral health-related evaluations and assessments. This is in addition to the already approved aforementioned services.

At this time, LDH will not be issuing a waiver to the licensure requirements needed to provide outpatient specialized behavioral health services for Medicaid reimbursement. Providers may access the Medicaid Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual at www.lamedicaid.com for more information. In addition, practitioners must follow all requirements of their professional licensing boards with regard to scope of practice and the provision of services via telehealth. LDH will provide updates as they are available. In addition, we will issue guidance on documentation requirements as appropriate.

IF in-person encounters between specialized behavioral health practitioners are considered medically necessary, and **IF** both the provider/staff member AND recipient/recipient’s family agree that such encounters are necessary and safe, all providers and recipients are *strongly-advised* to adhere to practice “DO THE FIVE”:

1. HANDS Wash them often
2. ELBOW Cough into it
3. FACE Don't touch it
4. FEET Stay more than 6ft apart
5. FEEL sick? Stay home

Providers are advised to limit in-person encounters only to those which are medically necessary, and should phone recipients/family **BEFORE** going to homes or community locations. Providers are strongly advised to limit in-person encounters only to those which cannot be done through telemedicine/telehealth technologies, are urgent, and are medically necessary. If such in-

person visits are required for the health and safety of the member, providers should phone recipients/family **BEFORE** going to homes or community locations. At this initial telephonic communication, the provider should screen recipients/families for COVID-19 risk, exposure or symptoms, including but not limited to the following:

- Report of history of or current temperature/fever, signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and relevant travel and exposure history.
- Document the absence of any temperature/fever, shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat *prior to engaging the recipient*.
- Personnel that live in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring, should not engage recipients if exhibiting respiratory symptoms and should be screened before engaging in recipient encounters.

The provider shall only proceed to initiate in person contact if both the provider and recipient are comfortable making in person contact. Providers should meet with each recipient/family in accord with CDC recommended social distancing guidance (example: While maintaining privacy, confidentiality and respecting conventions of HIPAA and Protected Health Information, meet recipient/family in open ventilated space, staying at least six (6) feet from recipient/family member during encounter. Consider conducting encounter outside of home/apartment.)

Providers may find more information about the coronavirus (COVID-19), including tips and resources for healthcare providers, by visiting: <http://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/> .
Specific information for providers is located here:
<http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/3880>