Governor Abbott Waives Certain Regulations For Telemedicine Care In Texas

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Governor Greg Abbott today waived certain regulations and directed that the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) issue an emergency rule, all relating to telemedicine care for patients with state-regulated insurance plans to help doctors across Texas continue to treat their patients while mitigating the spread of COVID-19. The suspensions and emergency rule will work together to allow telemedicine visits for patients with state-regulated plans to be paid the same as in-office visits for insurance purposes. These actions build upon waivers the Governor issued last week of portions in the Occupations Code to expand provider flexibility in providing medical services over the phone.

“As the State of Texas responds to COVID-19, we continue to work to maintain regular health care services and operations throughout the state, and telemedicine is one of the most valuable tools we have to ensure Texans continue to receive the health services they need,” said Governor Abbott. “Expanding telemedicine options will help protect the health of patients and health care professionals, and help Texas mitigate the spread of COVID-19.”

Doctors will be eligible for payment from insurance plans regulated by TDI for medical visits they conduct over the phone instead of in-person at the same rate they would receive for in-person visits.

Medical providers seeking guidance on the impact of the new rule can expect guidance from the Texas Medical Board to be issued in the coming days, including administrative guidance for billing to ensure that claims are processed smoothly.

Insurers seeking guidance on implementation of the emergency rule should contact TDI or visit their webpage for more information.

This coordinated efforts between the Office of the Governor, the Texas Department of Insurance, the Texas Medical Board, and health insurance plans will increase access to health care for all Texans. Today's action will expand telemedicine options by giving health care providers greater flexibility to perform audio-only telephone consultations with their patients.

As a reminder, Texans covered by CHIP or Medicaid will not be charged copays for test or telemedicine consults. Individuals covered by Medicare or large employer plans should check with their health plan administrator to determine their specific benefits.

Office of the Texas Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin Texas 78711
(512) 463-2000