

SB 74 & Telemedicine/Telehealth

TALKING POINTS

- SB 74 seeks to increase access to care in Alaska through the enhanced use of telemedicine by:
 - Prohibiting clinician licensure boards from sanctioning licensees for practice via telemedicine; and,
 - Creating a Telemedicine Business Registry in the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development.
- The Act also requires the State Medicaid program to expand the use of telehealth for Medicaid recipients;
- And requires the Department of Health & Social Services to report to the legislature on legal and technological barriers to telehealth, and to offer recommendations for expanding the use of telehealth.

MORE DETAILS

Telemedicine/Telehealth Provisions in SB 74

- Prohibits professional clinician licensure boards from imposing disciplinary sanctions on licensees for practice via audio, video, or data communications when physically separated from the patient within certain criteria. The boards for the following practitioners are addressed in the Act:
 - Audiologists (Section 1)
 - Speech-language pathologist assistants (Section 2)
 - Speech-language pathologists (Section 3)
 - Professional Counselors (Section 4)
 - Marital and Family Therapists (Section 6)
 - Physicians (Sections 7, 8, and 9)
 - Physical and Occupational Therapists (Section 13)
 - Psychologists and Psychological Associates (Section 14)
 - Social Workers (Section 15)
- Requires the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development to establish and maintain a Telemedicine Business Registry of businesses performing telemedicine services in the state. (Section 38)
- Requires the Medicaid program to expand the use of telehealth for primary care, behavioral health, and urgent care. (Section 43)
- Requires the Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) to:

- identify areas of the state where improvements in access to telehealth would be most effective in reducing Medicaid costs and improving access to care for Medicaid recipients;
 - improve access to telehealth for recipients in those locations; and,
 - enter into agreements with Indian Health Service providers, if necessary, to improve access by medical assistance recipients to telehealth facilities and equipment. (Sec. 43)
- Requires DHSS to include in an annual report on Medicaid reform to the legislature information on the legal and technological barriers to expanded use of telehealth, improvements in the use of telehealth in the state, and recommendations for changes or investments that would allow cost-effective expansion of telehealth. (Section 43)
- Allows DHSS to increase the capability for and reimbursement of telehealth for Medicaid recipients. (Section 45)
- Requires that proposals for Coordinated Care Demonstration Projects include information demonstrating how the project will implement cost-saving measures, including innovations to reduce the cost of care for Medicaid recipients through the expanded use of telehealth for primary care, urgent care, and behavioral health services. (Section 46)
- Requires the Department of Health & Social Services to identify legal or cost barriers preventing the expanded use of telehealth and recommend remedies for identified barriers. (Section 46)
- Defines “telehealth” as “the practice of health care delivery, evaluation, diagnosis, consultation, or treatment, using the transfer of health care data through audio, visual, or data communications, performed over two or more locations between providers who are physically separated from the recipient or from each other or between a provider and a recipient who are physically separated from each other.” (Section 43)