

**Effective Date:** 12/20/2017

**Subject:** Telemedicine/Telehealth

## **POLICY**

OSU Health Plan will provide reimbursement for Telemedicine and Telehealth services in which the healthcare professional and the patient are not at the same site. Examples include: services delivered by internet through interactive audio/visual devices or other interactive communication platforms.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Interactive Audio and Video Telecommunication, Interactive Audio and Visual Transmissions, Audio-Visual Communication Technology** Medical information is communicated in real-time with the use of interactive audio and video communications equipment. The real-time communication is between the patient and a distant physician or health care specialist who is performing the service reported. The patient must be present and participating throughout the communication.

**Originating Site** The location of a patient at the time the service being furnished via a telecommunications system occurs.

**Distant Site** The location of a provider at the time the service being provided via a telecommunications system occurs. This location needs to be a HIPAA Compliant Clinical Location. Examples include: physician or practitioner offices, hospitals, critical access hospitals, rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers, and skilled nursing facilities.

**Eligible Providers** Under this policy, the providers that can use telemedicine include: physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, clinical counselors, and registered dietitians or nutrition professionals.

**Telehealth/Telemedicine** Telehealth services are live, interactive audio and visual transmissions of a physician-patient encounter from one site to another using telecommunications technologies. They may include transmissions of real-time telecommunications or those transmitted by store-and-forward technology.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This policy is applicable to all licensed medical professionals in accordance with state laws regarding telemedicine.

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

Some of the most common service areas that telehealth and telemedicine are utilized in are: primary care, radiology, psychiatry, dermatology, ophthalmology, nephrology, obstetrics, oncology, pathology, and rehabilitation. This policy is not limited to these areas and utilization in other service areas is expected.

OSUHP will cover and include a majority of telemedicine and telehealth visits. However, there are exclusions to what OSUHP considers appropriate. These exclusions include:

1. Telemedicine/telehealth provided through non-HIPAA compliant telehealth platforms. These platforms include FaceTime, Skype, and other non-secure, non-approved platforms.
2. Telemedicine/telehealth provided by a provider located in a setting that is not clinically appropriate. Examples of this include at home, in a hotel room, in a public area, and others.
3. Telemedicine/telehealth visits that do not include real-time audio/visual interaction between the patient and provider. Examples of this include store and forward telehealth, e-mailing, phone calls, and others.

## **RESOURCES**

This policy was developed referencing Ohio laws and rules, as well as other insurers' telemedicine policies. OSUHP referenced the practices of the following payers in developing its telemedicine benefits and policy: Medicare, Ohio Medicaid, Aetna, United Healthcare, and Humana.