Telehealth and Teledentistry for MassHealth ACOs and CPs

What is Telehealth? What is Teledentistry?

Telehealth uses virtual platforms to provide health education, patient engagement, and clinical care delivery. Telehealth enables health care providers to improve access to primary and specialty care, including oral health and dental services, and can be offered in a variety of care settings including hospitals, clinics, acute care locations, community sites and even private residences.

While telehealth encompasses a broad range of health care providers and services, **teledentistry** specifically applies to the use of telehealth systems for the delivery of oral health care by dental providers.

Telehealth presents innovative opportunities for MassHealth Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and Community Partners (CPs) to better serve beneficiaries. These opportunities include **increasing access to oral health and dental services and supporting medical-dental integration initiatives**.

What are the benefits of using telehealth to improve a patient's oral health?

Potential for Cost Savings

- Reduce initial and repeat visits to the ED via appropriate management of oral & dental disease by dental providers
- Maintaining oral health can support chronic disease management of diabetic, pregnant, and other high-risk patients.

Increase Access to Oral Health Services

- Improve access for patients who are: medically compromised, physically disabled, living in rural or underserved areas, or face other barriers to access such as housing or transportation issues.
- Triage patients to identify those most in need of in-person services.

Cost

Quality | **Access**

Improve Care Coordination

- Improve communication between dentists, other dental providers, and medical providers.
- Enhance communication between dentists and patients.
- Improve coordination for patients with complex needs between ACOs and CPs.

How are telehealth services delivered?

Delivery Mode	Method	Details	Potential Application
Mobile technology and devices can be used to enhance communication and information-sharing between providers. Smartphones and tablets can also be used to provide educational information and reminders to patients.	Live video visits/ synchronous consults	Two-way real time interaction between a provider and a patient, caregiver, or another provider.	Can be used to make clinical assessments, manage chronic conditions, and triage the need for emergency services.
	Asynchronous "store and forward"	Patient care can be facilitated by transmitting photographs, x-rays, or other health information between dental providers.	Can be used to make evaluations or update a treatment plan without live interaction.
	Remote patient monitoring	Personal health or medical data can be collected or recorded by patients or caregivers and submitted electronically to a health care provider.	Can be used to monitor chronic conditions, provide patient education, and maintain patient engagement in ongoing care plans.

Table adapted from the Dentaquest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement

Case Studies of Telehealth for Oral Health Integration

California Virtual Dental Home

- Dental hygienists and assistants provide preventive care like cleaning and fluoride treatments to adults and children in the community. They conduct oral exams and take x-rays and share them with a collaborating dentist who establishes a treatment plan for patients. Two-thirds of patients were able to be treated in the community without being triaged to a dental office. MassHealth ACOs could employ a similar model to expand access to dental care for patients.

Remote Patient Education & Monitoring

- The Arizona School of Dental and Oral Health's "Text2Floss" App pushes out reminders to patients about preventive dental care. An App called PH2OH helps patients monitor the pH of their saliva and sends that information to their dentists. MassHealth ACOs could use similar technology to send patient education and reminders to attributed beneficiaries in collaboration with a dentist. Monitoring data can be collected from patients and shared with dentists.

What are the current MassHealth policies on telehealth and teledentistry?

- Recent policy changes by MassHealth have opened up additional flexibilities to reimburse providers for clinically appropriate phone and video-based visits.
- The MassHealth Dental program approved the ability for dental services to be provided via synchronous telehealth methods beginning March 12, 2020. The billing system was updated to allow participating providers to submit claims utilizing the current covered code set utilizing the place of service telehealth.
- Please see the MassHealth Provider Web Portal and the Office Reference Manual for more information.