

Position Statement: Telemedicine Use in Hearing Health Care

The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted the delivery of healthcare, it proliferated ‘access-to-care’ issues from poor and rural populations to metropolitan centers and suburbs. At the provider level, practitioners are adding or shifting to telehealth services while state governments focus on expanding telehealth in their Medicaid programs and the federal government focuses on loosening restrictions on telehealth under Medicare.

The Hearing Network Alliance (HNA) values the flexibility and expanded access that telemedicine offers and believes patients should be empowered to waive and replace some routine in-person activities with telehealth services including: some diagnostic testing, ongoing adjustments and follow-up care.

HNA POSITION

HNA supports the inclusion of hearing care services in any permanent expansion of telehealth and telemedicine. To maximize telehealth’s capacity and effectiveness, permanent expansion should be designed to ensure network adequacy, allow for interstate provider licensure, and maintain equitable reimbursement schedules.

TELEMEDICINE/TELEHEALTH HEARING CARE CONSULTATIONS SHOULD:

1. Meet accepted clinical standards for telemedicine regulated by each state;
 2. Include a licensed hearing care professional who is directly involved in interpreting diagnostics and administering treatment; and
 3. Offer hearing care patients clear choice and transparency in the use of services.
- Provided telemedicine and telehealth hearing care treatment is held to the same standards of appropriate in-person care and complies with all applicable laws, it can expand access to quality hearing care, enhance doctor-patient relationships, improve health outcomes and reduce costs.
 - Identification of any potential or actual audiological or chronic disorder (e.g., dementia, depression) should result in immediate patient referral to an appropriate licensed healthcare professional in a clinical setting.

ABOUT HNA: The Hearing Network Alliance (HNA) of the American Association of Payers, Administrators and Networks (AAPAN) is the unified voice for the managed hearing care industry. The association provides a forum for cooperative industry collaboration on initiatives that work to preserve and strengthen consumer access to affordable hearing insurance and benefits. HNA member companies cover millions of Americans by partnering with hearing care professionals in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.