

# Apple Health (Medicaid) FAQ for physical, occupational, and speech therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic

**\*\*Effective date 10/1/2023—See changes in red font\*\***

The Health Care Authority (HCA) created this document to help highlight HCA's telemedicine policy. Now that the public health emergency (PHE) has ended, this document is no longer necessary. HCA will sunset this document **effective October 1, 2023**. Refer to each question in this document for more information on where you can find HCA's telemedicine information for diabetes education providers.

In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Apple Health (Medicaid) is aware that usual and customary ways of providing and billing/reporting services may not be feasible. It is also understood that different providers will have different capabilities. Therefore, in the interest of public health, Apple Health is trying to be as flexible as possible and is creating new policies that will allow you to provide medically necessary services and bill or report the encounter with the most appropriate code you determine applicable using the guidance below.

**This FAQ reinforces the agency's current policies regarding telemedicine as defined in WAC 182-531-1730 and covers the new telehealth policies that will only be in effect during this health care crisis. We will update this FAQ as necessary to respond to new information as it develops.**

*The FAQ below was revised after new information was released Friday, March 20, by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in an all-state call about the use of telehealth in Medicaid.*

*Note: Medicaid is not subject to the same policies as Medicare*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Telemedicine and telehealth policies and how to bill

**Q: What is considered telemedicine and what is considered telehealth?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, HCA will sunset this policy. Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, see HCA's [Telemedicine policy and billing guide on HCA's Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#).**

For Apple Health, **telemedicine** is defined as services that are:

- Delivered via HIPAA compliant interactive, audio and video telecommunications (including web-based applications), and
- The provider works within their scope of practice to provide a covered service to an Apple Health eligible client.

Apple Health is allowing other modalities to be used when current practice for providing services is not an option (face-to-face, telemedicine).

These other modalities/technologies are considered telehealth, and for Apple Health, occupational, physical and speech therapists are able to bill the following telehealth service:

- Audio-only/telephone calls.

The service rendered must be equivalent to the procedure code used to bill for the service.

Services are paid at the same rate as if the service was provided in-person.

\*HCA-contracted MCOs are also adopting these policies.\*

See [HCA's Apple Health \(Medicaid\) clinical policy and billing for COVID-19](#) for more information about using communication and electronic technologies to provide care and how to bill.

HCA and the contracted MCOs are temporarily covering other procedures codes to support the delivery of care that may be helpful in billing for therapy services. These are described below.

**Q: What telemedicine services are covered?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, see HCA's *Outpatient rehabilitation and Neurodevelopmental billing guides* on [HCA's Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#).**

All Apple Health programs (FFS and MCOs) cover telemedicine for occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and speech therapy (ST) when they meet the definition for telemedicine. Telemedicine services are paid at the same rate as if the services was provided as an in person visit.

See [HCA's Apple Health \(Medicaid\) clinical policy and billing for COVID-19](#) for instructions on how to bill for telemedicine. \*Please confer with the client's MCO regarding billing requirements.

**Q. Which place of service (POS) should I use when billing HIPAA compliant telemedicine (audio-visual) or telehealth (audio-only)?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, see HCA's *Telemedicine policy and billing guide* on [HCA's Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#).**

**Effective October 1, 2021 to April 3, 2022:**

Apple Health is allowing audio-only/telephone to be used when current practice for providing services is not an option (face-to-face, telemedicine). Report the service modality code (CPT or HCPCS code) as you would if the encounter was in person. In these cases, Apple Health is temporarily allowing services using a telephone, as described above, to conduct an office visit. Report the code (CPT or HCPC) as you would if the encounter was in person. Always document the modality used for delivery in the health care record. Remember to use the POS indicator that best describes where the client is (e.g., 12 is home, 31 is skilled nursing facility, 13 is assisted living facility, etc.).

Do not bill with the providers location as the place of service.

\*HCA-contracted MCOs are also adopting these policies.

**Effective for dates of service on and after April 4, 2022:**

***(Providers whose systems are ready to bill using the new POS 10 prior to April 4, 2022, may begin to do so effective for claims with dates of service on and after January 1, 2022.)***

- Use the new POS 10 and the new definition of POS 02.
- Choose [the appropriate POS](#) when services were provided via telemedicine (audio-visual) or telehealth (audio-only).
- When billing for POS 02:
  - Add modifier 95 if the distant site is designated as a nonfacility.
  - Nonfacility providers must add modifier 95 to the claim to receive the nonfacility payment.
- **Effective for dates of service on and after July 22, 2022**, when billing for POS 10:
  - Add modifier 95 if the distant site is designated as a nonfacility
  - Nonfacility providers must add modifier 95 to the claim to receive the nonfacility payment

Place of service (POS)	Description
02	The location where health services and health related services are provided or received, through telecommunication technology. Patient is not located in their home when receiving health services or health related services through telecommunication technology.
10	The location where health services and health related services are provided or received through telecommunication technology. Patient is located in their home (which is a location other than a hospital or other facility where the patient receives care in a private residence) when receiving health services or health related services through telecommunication technology.

**Q. Which modifier should we use to denote that the services were provided via telehealth (audio-only)?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, see HCA's *Telemedicine policy and billing guide* on [HCA's Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#).**

The American Medical Association (AMA) released a new audio-only modifier on 12/30/21 with an effective date of 1/1/22. HCA is implementing the use of the modifier effective 2/1/22. Modifier FQ is allowed for DOS 1/1/22- 1/31/22. Please note that Behavioral Health and Mental Health Services have different allowances for the FQ modifier. See [Apple Health \(Medicaid\) behavioral health policy and billing during the COVID-19 pandemic \(FAQ\)](#).

Modifier	Modifier Descriptor
93	Synchronous Telemedicine Service Rendered Via Telephone or Other Real-Time Interactive Audio-Only Telecommunications System: Synchronous telemedicine service is defined as a real-time interaction between a physician or other qualified health care professional and a patient who is located away at a distant site from the physician or other qualified health care professional. The totality of the communication of information exchanged between the physician or other qualified health care professional and the patient during the course of the synchronous telemedicine service must be of an amount and nature that is sufficient to meet the key components and/or requirements of the same service when rendered via a face-to-face interaction.

**Q: Do I need to take any measures to inform the client about these technologies that may not be HIPAA compliant?**

**A: The public health emergency (PHE) ended on May 11, 2023. All services must be HIPAA-compliant. See HCA's *Clinical policy for COVID-19 billing guide, effective May 12, 2023*, on [HCA's Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#).**

Yes, clients must be informed when using a non-HIPAA compliant technology. This can be done in the following ways:

- Using mail to obtain written consent
- Use of an electronic signature
- Verbal - the information about this approach not being HIPAA-compliant being provided and the verbal consent **must** be documented and dated in the record. Once in-person visits are resumed, the client must sign a consent form that communicates in writing that the client provided consent to use a platform that could not protect their personal health information.

**Q: What other codes could be used if the other options above are not applicable to the care provided?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, HCA will sunset this policy.**

If you are a licensed provider who bills using therapy codes, but using the usual procedure code with one of the options above isn't applicable, the matrix of codes in the following table are also available. Each of the following CPT codes is considered one unit of therapy. \*HCA-contracted MCOs are also adopting these policies.

The following codes are available. See the [COVID-19 fee schedule](#) for rates.

CPT® Code	Short Description	Modifier
98966	HC PRO PHONE CALL 5-10 MIN	CR
98967	HC PRO PHONE CALL 11-20 MIN	CR
98968	HC PRO PHONE CALL 21-30 MIN	CR

**Q: What if I am trying to serve a new client, the codes listed above are for established patients?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, HCA will sunset this policy.**

Apple Health is allowing use of CPT® codes 98966-98968 for new or established patients during this crisis.

\*HCA-contracted MCOs will also follow this policy.

**Q: What if none of the codes listed in the table above describe the services I was able to provide via technology or telephone?**

**A: Effective for dates of service on and after October 1, 2023, HCA will sunset this policy.**

During COVID-19, Apple Health is allowing the following HCPCS code to be used when it is applicable to the situation. This code must be billed with the modifier CR.

\*HCA-contracted MCOs will also follow this policy.

HCPCS Code	Description
G2012	Brief communication technology-based service, e.g. virtual check-in, by a physician or other qualified health care professional who can report evaluation and management services, provided to an established patient, not originating from a related e/m service provided within the previous 7 days nor leading to an e/m service or procedure within the next 24 hours or soonest available appointment; 5-10 minutes of medical discussion

[Email](#) HCA's Apple Health clinical policy team for any questions related to HCA's telemedicine policy.