

Telehealth Services Billing Guide Audio-Only Supplement

What is happening?

The Health Care Authority (HCA) is implementing new audio-only telemedicine policies on August 1, 2022.

To support this, HCA has published a list of billing codes that are payable when services are provided by audio-only telemedicine (over the phone). This shift in billing practice comes because of 2021 legislation ([HB1196](#)), which requires coverage at parity of audio-only telemedicine that can be safely and effectively provided according to generally accepted health care practices and standards.

Before the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), HCA offered an expansive traditional telemedicine program, complete with a suite of HIPAA-compliant audio/visual telemedicine codes.

During the PHE, HCA added flexibilities to telehealth coverage to support access to care while maintaining physical distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19. This included modification to existing telehealth billing codes if they were being used for audio-only interactions.

As Washington emerges from the PHE, HCA is implementing access to audio-only services as directed by HB1196. **Effective August 1, 2022**, HCA will pay for audio-only services for specific billing codes when provided and billed as directed in HCA provider billing guides.

How do I bill HCA for these new codes?

The new list of audio-only codes is published on HCA's [Provider billing guides and fee schedules webpage](#) (scroll down to *Telehealth* under *Billing guides and fee schedules*), so billers and providers may familiarize themselves before the new requirement is implemented.

Apple Health (Medicaid) policies require the appropriate audio-only modifiers (93 or FQ). Information related to specific service areas and billing guidelines includes the following:

- For SERI and Part II of the [Mental Health Billing Guide](#), providers will use modifier FQ
- For Part 1 of the [Mental Health Billing Guide](#), providers will use modifier 93
- All other programs will use modifier 93

Modifier	Modifier Description
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 or requirements, or both, of the same service when rendered via a face-to-face interaction.
FQ	The service was furnished using audio-only communications technology

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Email the HCA Apple Health clinical policy team with any questions you may have.