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ALL PLAN LETTER

DATE: March 18, 2020
TO: All Health Care Service Plans
FROM: Sarah Ream, Acting General Counsel
SUBJECT: APL 20-009 – Reimbursement for Telehealth Services

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that people practice “social distancing.” However, people also need to be able to continue to have access to necessary medical care. Accordingly, health plans must take steps to allow people to obtain health care via telehealth¹ when medically appropriate to do so.

Pursuant to the authority granted in the California Emergency Services Act (Gov. Code sections 8566, et seq.), all health plans shall, effective immediately, comply with the following:

1. Health plans shall reimburse providers at the same rate, whether a service is provided in-person or through telehealth, if the service is the same regardless of the modality of delivery, as determined by the provider’s description of the service on the claim. For example, if a health plan reimburses a mental health provider \$100 for a 50-minute therapy session conducted in-person, the health plan shall reimburse the provider \$100 for a 50-minute therapy session done via telehealth.²
2. For services provided via telehealth, a health plan may not subject enrollees to cost-sharing greater than the same cost-sharing if the service were provided in-person.
3. Health plans shall provide the same amount of reimbursement for a service rendered via telephone as they would if the service is rendered via video,

¹ As used in this All Plan Letter, “telehealth” has the same meaning as that term is defined in Business and Professions Code section 2290.5, subdivision (a).

² This provision does not require telehealth reimbursement to be unbundled from other capitated or bundled, risk-based payments.

provided the modality by which the service is rendered (telephone versus video) is medically appropriate for the enrollee.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this APL, please contact Sarah Ream, Acting General Counsel, at (916) 324-2522 or via email at Sarah.Ream@dmhc.ca.gov.