

CHAPTER 117
(CORRECTED COPY)

AN ACT authorizing the provision of health care services through telemedicine and telehealth, and supplementing various parts of the statutory law.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.45:1-61 Definitions relative to telemedicine and telehealth.

1. As used in P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.):

“Asynchronous store-and-forward” means the acquisition and transmission of images, diagnostics, data, and medical information either to, or from, an originating site or to, or from, the health care provider at a distant site, which allows for the patient to be evaluated without being physically present.

“Cross-coverage service provider” means a health care provider, acting within the scope of a valid license or certification issued pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, who engages in a remote medical evaluation of a patient, without in-person contact, at the request of another health care provider who has established a proper provider-patient relationship with the patient.

“Distant site” means a site at which a health care provider, acting within the scope of a valid license or certification issued pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, is located while providing health care services by means of telemedicine or telehealth.

“Health care provider” means an individual who provides a health care service to a patient, and includes, but is not limited to, a licensed physician, nurse, nurse practitioner, psychologist, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, clinical social worker, physician assistant, professional counselor, respiratory therapist, speech pathologist, audiologist, optometrist, or any other health care professional acting within the scope of a valid license or certification issued pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes.

“On-call provider” means a licensed or certified health care provider who is available, where necessary, to physically attend to the urgent and follow-up needs of a patient for whom the provider has temporarily assumed responsibility, as designated by the patient’s primary care provider or other health care provider of record.

“Originating site” means a site at which a patient is located at the time that health care services are provided to the patient by means of telemedicine or telehealth.

“Telehealth” means the use of information and communications technologies, including telephones, remote patient monitoring devices, or other electronic means, to support clinical health care, provider consultation, patient and professional health-related education, public health, health administration, and other services in accordance with the provisions of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.).

“Telemedicine” means the delivery of a health care service using electronic communications, information technology, or other electronic or technological means to bridge the gap between a health care provider who is located at a distant site and a patient who is located at an originating site, either with or without the assistance of an intervening health care provider, and in accordance with the provisions of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.). “Telemedicine” does not include the use, in isolation, of audio-only telephone conversation, electronic mail, instant messaging, phone text, or facsimile transmission.

“Telemedicine or telehealth organization” means a corporation, sole proprietorship, partnership, or limited liability company that is organized for the primary purpose of administering services in the furtherance of telemedicine or telehealth.

C.45:1-62 Provision of health care through use of telemedicine, telehealth; requirements for provider.

2. a. Unless specifically prohibited or limited by federal or State law, a health care provider who establishes a proper provider-patient relationship with a patient may remotely provide health care services to a patient through the use of telemedicine. A health care provider may also engage in telehealth as may be necessary to support and facilitate the provision of health care services to patients.

b. Any health care provider who uses telemedicine or engages in telehealth while providing health care services to a patient, shall: (1) be validly licensed, certified, or registered, pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, to provide such services in the State of New Jersey; (2) remain subject to regulation by the appropriate New Jersey State licensing board or other New Jersey State professional regulatory entity; (3) act in compliance with existing requirements regarding the maintenance of liability insurance; and (4) remain subject to New Jersey jurisdiction if either the patient or the provider is located in New Jersey at the time services are provided.

c. (1) Telemedicine services shall be provided using interactive, real-time, two-way communication technologies.

(2) A health care provider engaging in telemedicine or telehealth may use asynchronous store-and-forward technology to allow for the electronic transmission of images, diagnostics, data, and medical information; except that the health care provider may use interactive, real-time, two-way audio in combination with asynchronous store-and-forward technology, without video capabilities, if, after accessing and reviewing the patient’s medical records, the provider determines that the provider is able to meet the same standard of care as if the health care services were being provided in person.

(3) The identity, professional credentials, and contact information of a health care provider providing telemedicine or telehealth services shall be made available

to the patient during and after the provision of services. The contact information shall enable the patient to contact the health care provider, or a substitute health care provider authorized to act on behalf of the provider who provided services, for at least 72 hours following the provision of services.

(4) A health care provider engaging in telemedicine or telehealth shall review the medical history and any medical records provided by the patient. For an initial encounter with the patient, the provider shall review the patient's medical history and medical records prior to initiating contact with the patient, as required pursuant to paragraph (3) of subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-63). In the case of a subsequent telemedicine or telehealth encounter conducted pursuant to an ongoing provider-patient relationship, the provider may review the information prior to initiating contact with the patient or contemporaneously with the telemedicine or telehealth encounter.

(5) Following the provision of services using telemedicine or telehealth, the patient's medical information shall be made available to the patient upon the patient's request, and, with the patient's affirmative consent, forwarded directly to the patient's primary care provider or health care provider of record, or, upon request by the patient, to other health care providers. For patients without a primary care provider or other health care provider of record, the health care provider engaging in telemedicine or telehealth may advise the patient to contact a primary care provider, and, upon request by the patient, assist the patient with locating a primary care provider or other in-person medical assistance that, to the extent possible, is located within reasonable proximity to the patient. The health care provider engaging in telemedicine or telehealth shall also refer the patient to appropriate follow up care where necessary, including making appropriate referrals for emergency or complimentary care, if needed. Consent may be oral, written, or digital in nature, provided that the chosen method of consent is deemed appropriate under the standard of care.

d. (1) Any health care provider providing health care services using telemedicine or telehealth shall be subject to the same standard of care or practice standards as are applicable to in-person settings. If telemedicine or telehealth services would not be consistent with this standard of care, the health care provider shall direct the patient to seek in-person care.

(2) Diagnosis, treatment, and consultation recommendations, including discussions regarding the risk and benefits of the patient's treatment options, which are made through the use of telemedicine or telehealth, including the issuance of a prescription based on a telemedicine or telehealth encounter, shall be held to the same standard of care or practice standards as are applicable to in-person settings. Unless the provider has established a proper provider-patient relationship with the patient, a provider shall not issue a prescription to a patient based solely on the responses provided in an online questionnaire.

e. The prescription of Schedule II controlled dangerous substances through the use of telemedicine or telehealth shall be authorized only after an initial in-person examination of the patient, as provided by regulation, and a subsequent in-person visit with the patient shall be required every three months for the duration of time that the patient is being prescribed the Schedule II controlled dangerous substance. However, the provisions of this subsection shall not apply, and the in-person examination or review of a patient shall not be required, when a health care provider is prescribing a stimulant which is a Schedule II controlled dangerous substance for use by a minor patient under the age of 18, provided that the health care provider is using interactive, real-time, two-way audio and video technologies when treating the patient and the health care provider has first obtained written consent for the waiver of these in-person examination requirements from the minor patient's parent or guardian.

f. A mental health screener, screening service, or screening psychiatrist subject to the provisions of P.L.1987, c.116 (C.30:4-27.1 et seq.):

(1) shall not be required to obtain a separate authorization in order to engage in telemedicine or telehealth for mental health screening purposes; and

(2) shall not be required to request and obtain a waiver from existing regulations, prior to engaging in telemedicine or telehealth.

g. A health care provider who engages in telemedicine or telehealth, as authorized by P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.), shall maintain a complete record of the patient's care, and shall comply with all applicable State and federal statutes and regulations for recordkeeping, confidentiality, and disclosure of the patient's medical record.

h. A health care provider shall not be subject to any professional disciplinary action under Title 45 of the Revised Statutes solely on the basis that the provider engaged in telemedicine or telehealth pursuant to P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.).

i. (1) In accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the State boards or other entities that, pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, are responsible for the licensure, certification, or registration of health care providers in the State, shall each adopt rules and regulations that are applicable to the health care providers under their respective jurisdictions, as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this section and facilitate the provision of telemedicine and telehealth services. Such rules and regulations shall, at a minimum:

(a) include best practices for the professional engagement in telemedicine and telehealth;

(b) ensure that the services patients receive using telemedicine or telehealth are appropriate, medically necessary, and meet current quality of care standards;

(c) include measures to prevent fraud and abuse in connection with the use of telemedicine and telehealth, including requirements concerning the filing of claims and maintaining appropriate records of services provided; and

(d) provide substantially similar metrics for evaluating quality of care and patient outcomes in connection with services provided using telemedicine and telehealth as currently apply to services provided in person.

(2) In no case shall the rules and regulations adopted pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection require a provider to conduct an initial in-person visit with the patient as a condition of providing services using telemedicine or telehealth.

(3) The failure of any licensing board to adopt rules and regulations pursuant to this subsection shall not have the effect of delaying the implementation of this act, and shall not prevent health care providers from engaging in telemedicine or telehealth in accordance with the provisions of this act and the practice act applicable to the provider's professional licensure, certification, or registration.

C.45:1-63 Establishment of proper provider-patient relationship; exceptions.

3. a. Any health care provider who engages in telemedicine or telehealth shall ensure that a proper provider-patient relationship is established. The establishment of a proper provider-patient relationship shall include, but shall not be limited to:

(1) properly identifying the patient using, at a minimum, the patient's name, date of birth, phone number, and address. When properly identifying the patient, the provider may additionally use the patient's assigned identification number, social security number, photo, health insurance policy number, or other appropriate patient identifier associated directly with the patient;

(2) disclosing and validating the provider's identity and credentials, such as the provider's license, title, and, if applicable, specialty and board certifications;

(3) prior to initiating contact with a patient in an initial encounter for the purpose of providing services to the patient using telemedicine or telehealth, reviewing the patient's medical history and any available medical records; and

(4) prior to initiating contact with a patient for the purpose of providing services to the patient using telemedicine or telehealth, determining whether the provider will be able to provide the same standard of care using telemedicine or telehealth as would be provided if the services were provided in person. The provider shall make this determination prior to each unique patient encounter.

b. Telemedicine or telehealth may be practiced without a proper provider-patient relationship, as defined in subsection a. of this section, in the following circumstances:

(1) during informal consultations performed by a health care provider outside the context of a contractual relationship, or on an irregular or infrequent basis, without the expectation or exchange of direct or indirect compensation;

(2) during episodic consultations by a medical specialist located in another jurisdiction who provides consultation services, upon request, to a properly licensed or certified health care provider in this State;

(3) when a health care provider furnishes medical assistance in response to an emergency or disaster, provided that there is no charge for the medical assistance; or

(4) when a substitute health care provider, who is acting on behalf of an absent health care provider in the same specialty, provides health care services on an on-call or cross-coverage basis, provided that the absent health care provider has designated the substitute provider as an on-call provider or cross-coverage service provider.

C.45:1-64 Annual registration, report.

4. a. Each telemedicine or telehealth organization operating in the State shall annually register with the Department of Health.

b. Each telemedicine or telehealth organization operating in the State shall submit an annual report to the Department of Health in a manner as determined by the commissioner. The annual report shall include de-identified encounter data including, but not limited to: the total number of telemedicine and telehealth encounters conducted; the type of technology utilized to provide services using telemedicine or telehealth; the category of medical condition for which services were sought; the geographic region of the patient and the provider; the patient's age and sex; and any prescriptions issued. The commissioner may require the reporting of any additional information as the commissioner deems necessary and appropriate, subject to all applicable State and federal laws, rules, and regulations for recordkeeping and privacy. Commencing six months after the effective date of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.), telemedicine and telehealth organizations shall include in the annual report, for each telemedicine or telehealth encounter: the patient's race and ethnicity; the diagnostic codes; the evaluation management codes; and the source of payment for the encounter.

c. The Department of Health shall compile the information provided in the reports submitted by telemedicine and telehealth organizations pursuant to subsection b. of this section to generate Statewide data concerning telemedicine and telehealth services provided in the State. The department shall annually share the Statewide data with the Department of Human Services, the Department of Banking and Insurance, the Telemedicine and Telehealth Review Commission established pursuant to section 5 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-65), State boards and other entities that, under Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, are responsible for the professional licensure, certification, or registration of health care providers in the State who provide health care services using telemedicine or telehealth pursuant to P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.), and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164

(C.52:14-19.1). The department shall also transmit a report to the Legislature and the Telemedicine and Telehealth Review Commission that includes: an analysis of each rule and regulation adopted pursuant to subsection i. of section 2 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-62) by a State board or other entity responsible for the professional licensure, certification, or registration of health care providers in the State who provide health care services using telemedicine or telehealth; and an assessment of the effect that telemedicine and telehealth is having on health care delivery, health care outcomes, population health, and in-person health care services provided in facility-based and office-based settings.

d. A telemedicine or telehealth organization that fails to register with the Department of Health pursuant to subsection a. of this section or that fails to submit the annual report required pursuant to subsection b. of this section shall be liable to such disciplinary actions as the Commissioner of Health may prescribe by regulation.

C.45:1-65 Telemedicine and Telehealth Review Commission.

5. a. Six months after the effective date of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.), there shall be established in the Department of Health the Telemedicine and Telehealth Review Commission, which shall review the information reported by telemedicine and telehealth organizations pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-64) and make recommendations for such executive, legislative, regulatory, administrative, and other actions as may be necessary and appropriate to promote and improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of telemedicine and telehealth services provided in this State.

b. The commission shall consist of seven members, as follows: the Commissioner of Health, or a designee, who shall serve ex officio, and six public members, with two members each to be appointed by the Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the General Assembly. The public members shall be health care professionals with a background in the provision of health care services using telemedicine and telehealth. The public members shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority, and vacancies in the membership shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

c. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for necessary travel expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits of funds made available for that purpose.

d. The members shall select a chairperson and a vice chairperson from among the members. The chairperson may appoint a secretary, who need not be a member of the commission. The Department of Health shall provide staff and administrative support to the commission.

e. The commission shall meet at least twice a year and at such other times as the chairperson may require. The commission shall be entitled to call to its

assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available for its purposes.

f. The commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Commissioner of Health, the State boards or other entities that, pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, are responsible for the licensure, certification, or registration of health care providers in the State who provide health care services using telemedicine or telehealth pursuant to P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.), and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature no later than two years after the date the commission first meets. The commission shall expire upon submission of its report.

C.45:1-66 Severability.

6. If any provision of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.) or its application to any person or circumstance is held to be invalid, the invalidity shall not affect any other provision or application of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.) which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and, to this end, the provisions of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61 et al.) are severable.

C.30:4D-6k State Medicaid, NJ FamilyCare programs to provide coverage, payment

7. a. The State Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs shall provide coverage and payment for health care services delivered to a benefits recipient through telemedicine or telehealth, on the same basis as, and at a provider reimbursement rate that does not exceed the provider reimbursement rate that is applicable, when the services are delivered through in-person contact and consultation in New Jersey. Reimbursement payments under this section may be provided either to the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, or to the agency, facility, or organization that employs the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, as appropriate.

b. The State Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs may limit coverage to services that are delivered by participating health care providers, but may not charge any deductible, copayment, or coinsurance for a health care service, delivered through telemedicine or telehealth, in an amount that exceeds the deductible, copayment, or coinsurance amount that is applicable to an in-person consultation.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) prohibit the State Medicaid or NJ FamilyCare programs from providing coverage for only those services that are medically necessary, subject to the terms and conditions of the recipient's benefits plan; or

(2) allow the State Medicaid or NJ FamilyCare programs to require a benefits recipient to use telemedicine or telehealth in lieu of obtaining an in-person service from a participating health care provider.

d. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall apply for such State plan amendments or waivers as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this section and to secure federal financial participation for State expenditures under the federal Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program.

e. As used in this section:

"Benefits recipient" or "recipient" means a person who is eligible for, and who is receiving, hospital or medical benefits under the State Medicaid program established pursuant to P.L.1968, c.413 (C.30:4D-1 et seq.), or under the NJ FamilyCare program established pursuant to P.L.2005, c.156 (C.30:4J-8 et al.), as appropriate.

"Participating health care provider" means a licensed or certified health care provider who is registered to provide health care services to benefits recipients under the State Medicaid or NJ FamilyCare programs, as appropriate.

"Telehealth" means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

"Telemedicine" means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

C.26:2S-29 Carrier offering a health benefits plan to provide coverage, payment.

8. a. A carrier that offers a health benefits plan in this State shall provide coverage and payment for health care services delivered to a covered person through telemedicine or telehealth, on the same basis as, and at a provider reimbursement rate that does not exceed the provider reimbursement rate that is applicable, when the services are delivered through in-person contact and consultation in New Jersey. Reimbursement payments under this section may be provided either to the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, or to the agency, facility, or organization that employs the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, as appropriate.

b. A carrier may limit coverage to services that are delivered by health care providers in the health benefits plan's network, but may not charge any deductible, copayment, or coinsurance for a health care service, delivered through telemedicine or telehealth, in an amount that exceeds the deductible, copayment, or coinsurance amount that is applicable to an in-person consultation.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) prohibit a carrier from providing coverage for only those services that are medically necessary, subject to the terms and conditions of the covered person's health benefits plan; or

(2) allow a carrier to require a covered person to use telemedicine or telehealth in lieu of receiving an in-person service from an in-network provider.

d. The Commissioner of Banking and Insurance shall adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to implement the provisions of this section.

e. As used in this section:

“Carrier” means the same as that term is defined by section 2 of P.L.1997, c.192 (C.26:2S-2).

“Covered person” means the same as that term is defined by section 2 of P.L.1997, c.192 (C.26:2S-2).

“Health benefits plan” means the same as that term is defined by section 2 of P.L.1997, c.192 (C.26:2S-2).

“Telehealth” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

“Telemedicine” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

C.52:14-17.29w State Health Benefits Commission to provide coverage, payment.

9. a. The State Health Benefits Commission shall ensure that every contract purchased thereby, which provides hospital and medical expense benefits, additionally provides coverage and payment for health care services delivered to a covered person through telemedicine or telehealth, on the same basis as, and at a provider reimbursement rate that does not exceed the provider reimbursement rate that is applicable, when the services are delivered through in-person contact and consultation in New Jersey. Reimbursement payments under this section may be provided either to the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, or to the agency, facility, or organization that employs the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, as appropriate.

b. A health benefits contract purchased by the State Health Benefits Commission may limit coverage to services that are delivered by health care providers in the health benefits plan’s network, but may not charge any deductible, copayment, or coinsurance for a health care service, delivered through telemedicine or telehealth, in an amount that exceeds the deductible, copayment, or coinsurance amount that is applicable to an in-person consultation.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) prohibit a health benefits contract from providing coverage for only those services that are medically necessary, subject to the terms and conditions of the covered person’s health benefits plan; or

(2) allow the State Health Benefits Commission, or a contract purchased thereby, to require a covered person to use telemedicine or telehealth in lieu of receiving an in-person service from an in-network provider.

d. The State Health Benefits Commission shall adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to implement the provisions of this section.

e. As used in this section:

“Telehealth” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

“Telemedicine” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

C.52:14-17.46.6h School Employees Health Benefits Commission to provide coverage, payment.

10. a. The School Employees’ Health Benefits Commission shall ensure that every contract purchased thereby, which provides hospital and medical expense benefits, additionally provides coverage and payment for health care services delivered to a covered person through telemedicine or telehealth, on the same basis as, and at a provider reimbursement rate that does not exceed the provider reimbursement rate that is applicable, when the services are delivered through in-person contact and consultation in New Jersey. Reimbursement payments under this section may be provided either to the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, or to the agency, facility, or organization that employs the individual practitioner who delivered the reimbursable services, as appropriate.

b. A health benefits contract purchased by the School Employees’ Health Benefits Commission may limit coverage to services that are delivered by health care providers in the health benefits plan’s network, but may not charge any deductible, copayment, or coinsurance for a health care service, delivered through telemedicine or telehealth, in an amount that exceeds the deductible, copayment, or coinsurance amount that is applicable to an in-person consultation.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) prohibit a health benefits contract from providing coverage for only those services that are medically necessary, subject to the terms and conditions of the covered person’s health benefits plan; or

(2) allow the School Employees’ Health Benefits Commission, or a contract purchased thereby, to require a covered person to use telemedicine or telehealth in lieu of receiving an in-person service from an in-network provider.

d. The School Employees’ Health Benefits Commission shall adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to implement the provisions of this section.

e. As used in this section:

“Telehealth” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

“Telemedicine” means the same as that term is defined by section 1 of P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-61).

11. This act shall take effect immediately, and section 5 of this act shall expire upon submission of the commission’s report.

Approved July 21, 2017.