

Due to recent Executive Order 2020-15 by Governor Ducey, telemedicine services may be provided by an Arizona licensed healthcare provider, including physical therapists. Here are some of the FAQs and guideline to consider. Information is changing daily as many new strategies are approved for public health and safety during this Public Health Emergency. Please check frequently for updates and changes.

- 1) When can physical therapists start telemedicine?** The Executive Order is effective MARCH 25, 2020 and continues through the duration of the Public Health Emergency declared in Arizona on March 11, 2020.
- 2) Does this change the law in Arizona that limits telemedicine to only certain providers?** No. When the Public Health Emergency is discontinued, the Arizona law still limits physical therapists from providing telemedicine services. **HB2536**, still pending a final vote in the state Senate, will permanently change the law. The legislative session may resume in April. AzPTA will continue our efforts to complete HB2536 with an emergency clause that will allow it to be effective immediately when signed by Gov. Ducey.
- 3) Can PTAs provide telemedicine services in Arizona?** Yes, under general supervision of a physical therapist. Refer to R4-24-303 Patient Care Management in the physical therapy rules for details.
- 4) Will private health insurances pay for physical therapy telemedicine visits?** Yes. The Executive Order 20020-15 requires insurers to “allow all electronic means of delivering telemedicine, including telephone and video calls” Insurers “must reimburse providers at the same level of payment for a telemedicine visit as they would an in-person visit.” Be aware that some insurance companies are using specified codes for telemedicine visits. Contact your payers for details prior to submitting claims. Some HIPAA compliance requirements have been waived temporarily for use of a broad variety of telecommunications with patients.
- 5) Will Medicare cover telemedicine?** Yes. Initially, Medicare approved e-visits for therapy providers, a limited benefit for physical therapists to use with specialized codes for patient care management. Medicare is now considering telemedicine visits using 97000 codes – details from Medicare are pending.
- 6) Does AHCCCS cover telemedicine?** Yes. AHCCCS covers telemedicine for contracted providers. See AHCCCS guidelines from their contracted payers for details.
- 7) Does Worker’s Compensation cover telemedicine?** We are awaiting clarification on worker’s compensation payment for telemedicine physical therapy services. The Industrial Commission of Arizona is reviewing a number of their payment policies.

8) What rules does Arizona have about telemedicine? ARS Title 36, Chapter 36 Public Health and Safety provides legal requirements for all providers who participate in telemedicine. They include these excerpts from that statute:

A. Except as provided in subsection E of this section, before a health care provider delivers health care through telemedicine, the treating health care provider shall obtain verbal or written informed consent from the patient or the patient's health care decision maker. If the informed consent is obtained verbally, the health care provider shall document the consent on the patient's medical record.

B. The patient is entitled to all existing confidentiality protections pursuant to [§ 12-2292](#).

C. All medical reports resulting from a telemedicine consultation are part of a patient's medical record as defined in [§ 12-2291](#).

D. Dissemination of any images or information identifiable to a specific patient for research or educational purposes shall not occur without the patient's consent, unless authorized by state or federal law.

9) Does telemedicine expand the scope of practice of physical therapists? No. The definition of the practice of physical therapy in Arizona has not changed. Physical therapists may use the delivery system of telemedicine to provide physical therapy care.

10) Can I provide telemedicine visits to my snowbird patients when they leave Arizona to go out of state? It depends. Physical therapists licensed in Arizona may provide telemedicine services to a patient that is physically located in Arizona during the PT/client interaction. You may provide telemedicine services to a patient who is physically located in another state if

- 1) those states also allow for telemedicine physical therapy, and
- 2) you are licensed, or have a compact privilege to practice in that state.

With Executive Orders varying from state to state, there may be some exceptions to licensure requirements during this public health emergency. Physical therapists should review applicable laws and temporary executive orders for compliance to state regulatory requirements.

11) What are the standards of care for telemedicine physical therapy? When providing a telemedicine visit, physical therapists must attempt to provide a service that meets the standards of care required both professionally and legally. Regardless of delivery method, physical therapist must complete an evaluation prior to providing physical therapy interventions. Client/patients should be made aware of the limitations that telemedicine services present as compared to an in person visit, such as the inability to perform hands-on examination, assessment and treatment. Physical therapy providers shall be guided by professional discipline and existing clinical practice guidelines. Document a telemedicine visit in consistent with standards for an in person visit, including the patient informed consent and type of telemedicine visit.

12) Does Arizona Department of Developmental Disabilities cover telemedicine? Yes. Please see the link below for guidelines and billing information from DDD for contracted providers.

<https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/vendors-providers/covid-19-qualified-vendor-provider-faq>