

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Outlines Telehealth Service Changes as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

WASHINGTON, May 4, 2020 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary Bette Brand today released a summary of [key service changes](#) to increase the use of telehealth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These measures include allowing rural health clinics and federally qualified health centers to serve as “distant site” providers, increasing the types of services that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services can deliver via telehealth, and allowing certain telehealth services to be delivered to Medicare recipients by phone.

Telehealth uses technology such as mobile phones or computers to deliver health care. It has become an indispensable tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. It helps free up medical staff and equipment, helps decrease the ability of the virus to spread from one person to another, and helps support other applications such as distance learning and remote monitoring. It also helps link rural residents to health care services not available locally. The CDC considers telehealth a promising public health tool because of its potential to provide increased health care access to medically underserved populations.

These changes will help ensure that more rural residents can access care when and where they need it during this pandemic. They will benefit rural leaders and partners in areas such as community and economic development, agriculture, food and nutrition, and education.

This summary is intended to help interested parties understand the telehealth changes that have been made, and explore new ways to support health care providers as they increase or transition to virtual care services.

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