

Memo

Date: 10/09/2020

To: State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health

From: Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa

RE: Telemedicine extensions in Minnesota

Thank you for your concerns about the use of telemedicine in Minnesota for mental health services. I want to assure you that through DHS, Governor Walz is doing everything Minnesota can do to keep our telehealth modifications in place.

As you may know, the Minnesota Legislature enacted a bill during the special session to extend our telehealth modifications to June 30, 2021. DHS is pursuing a State Plan Amendment (SPA) to allow telemedicine modifications to remain through June 30, 2021. This requires approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). If the SPA is approved by CMS, these changes to the state plan will be permanent, retroactive to October 1, 2020. The SPA, [20-11 draft](#), is currently available for public comment and will be submitted to CMS later this month.

Currently, our telemedicine modifications are tied to the Federal Public Health Emergency. On Friday, October 2, 2020 Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that the [Federal Public Health Emergency](#) has been renewed. Assuming a full 90-day extension, this will extend the Public Health Emergency through January 21, 2021 and will allow for Minnesota's telemedicine modifications to remain in effect at least until that time. If CMS does not approve our request for changes to the SPA, the modifications will end when the Federal Public Health Emergency ends.

Anyone looking to take action could encourage the President, HHS, and members of Congress to confirm that the Federal Public Health Emergency will continue to be extended as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. This would help to alleviate uncertainty about the ending of our telemedicine modifications.

The Behavioral Health Division (BHD) and Health Care Administration (HCA) are currently conducting focus groups with partners and providers familiar with delivering telemedicine. Individual treatment providers as well as representatives from provider organizations that provide physical or behavioral health care treatment services through telemedicine or telephonic modes have been invited to participate. The focus groups will examine how telemedicine and other remote service delivery methods are able to deliver equitable, efficient, and high-quality treatment services to Minnesotans with physical and behavioral health needs.

The provider focus group is part of a broader study to assess how telemedicine treatment services in health care, mental health, and substance use disorder settings have been used before and during the public health emergency, whether those treatment services are effective, and what barriers providers and service recipients face. The results of this analysis will help DHS make well-informed recommendations regarding the future of telemedicine in Minnesota and coverage under the state's public health care programs.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa

Assistant Commissioner
Community Supports Administration
Minnesota Department of Human Services

CC: Neerja Singh, Deputy Director, Behavioral Health Division

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