



Updated CMS Guidance Provides Increased Payment for Telephone Services

ASGE applauds CMS efforts to continue to provide more flexibilities to providers in the fight against COVID-19.

Today, the Agency announced that it will provide parity in payment for telephone/audio-only services. Specifically, Medicare payment for the telephone evaluation and management visits would be equivalent to Medicare payment for office/outpatient visits with established patients effective March 1, 2020. This means that payment for CPT codes 99441-99443 would increase from a range of about \$14-\$41 to about \$46-\$110. ASGE is seeking clarification from CMS on if the amended policy also applies to new patients.

Advocating for this change has been a priority for ASGE and its sister societies. ASGE's initial request for this change was highlighted in its March 20 [letter](#) to congressional leaders.

The [guidance](#) updated today provides temporary regulatory waivers and new rules to give providers maximum flexibility in response to COVID-19.

Telephone Evaluation, Management/Assessment and Management Services, and Behavioral Health and Education Services

- A broad range of clinicians, including physicians, can now provide certain services by telephone to their patients.
- Medicare payment for the telephone evaluation and management visits (CPT codes 99441-99443) is equivalent to the Medicare payment for office/outpatient visits with established patients effective March 1, 2020.
- When clinicians are furnishing an evaluation and management (E/M) service that would otherwise be reported as an in-person or telehealth visit, using audio-only technology, practitioners may bill using these telephone E/M codes provided that it is appropriate to furnish the service using audio-only technology and all of the required elements in the applicable telephone E/M code (99441-99443) description are met.
- Using new waiver authority, CMS is also allowing many behavioral health and education services to be furnished via telehealth using audio-only communications. The full list of telehealth services notes which services are eligible to be furnished via audio-only technology, including the telephone evaluation and management visits: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/Telehealth/Telehealth-Codes>

