

2026 Telemedicine Updates

Medicare telehealth flexibilities extended (major update)

Congress passed legislation in early 2026 extending most COVID-era Medicare telehealth flexibilities through Dec. 31, 2027.

This means providers can continue to:

- Deliver telehealth to patients at home
- Practice without geographic restrictions
- Offer telehealth across a broad range of provider types
- Use audio-only visits when appropriate

These policies were originally set to expire Jan. 30, 2026, but were extended to avoid a “telehealth cliff” or major disruption of telehealth services that would have significantly disrupted outpatient specialty visits, including HIV and infectious diseases care.

Medicare continues to cover many common outpatient services via telehealth, including office/outpatient evaluation and management visits (CPT 99202-99214). Outpatient telehealth visits continue to be billed using standard E/M codes based on medical decision making or total time, with appropriate telehealth modifiers (e.g., modifier 95 for interactive video/audio visits) and place-of-service designation reflecting telehealth. Audio-only visits remain allowable and billable when clinically appropriate (such as when a patient is unable to use video) and documented accordingly (e.g., time-based billing with modifier 93).

Behavioral telehealth remains permanently expanded

Some behavioral/mental health telehealth policies are now permanent, including:

- Home as originating site
- No geographic restrictions
- Audio-only behavioral telehealth allowed
- Expanded behavioral provider eligibility

DEA telemedicine prescribing flexibilities extended through 2026

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and Department of Health and Human Services extended rules allowing controlled substance prescribing via telemedicine without a prior in-person visit through Dec. 31, 2026, while permanent rules are finalized.

This directly impacts psychiatry, pain, ADHD treatment and medication-assisted treatment programs.

What this practically means for 2026:

- Telehealth access largely remains intact.
- Home-based visits are still allowed for Medicare.
- Audio-only is still reimbursable in many cases.
- Controlled-substance tele-prescribing continues (temporary).



- Long-term permanence is still unresolved.

Additional Information

1. Japsen B. Congress extends Medicare telehealth coverage for two years. *Forbes*. Published Feb. 3, 2026. Accessed Feb. 27, 2026.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Telehealth policy updates. Updated 2026. Accessed Feb. 27, 2026.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. DEA and HHS extend telemedicine flexibilities for prescribing controlled substances through 2026. Published 2026. Accessed Feb. 27, 2026.
4. Mintz. Telehealth update: Telehealth flexibilities and future policy considerations. Published Jan. 8, 2026. Accessed Feb. 27, 2026.
5. Medicare.gov. Telehealth services coverage. Updated 2026. Accessed Feb. 27, 2026.