STAYING COOL WITH THE UMTRC!

This July has brought a heat wave to all four states in the Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center's region – we hope that you're all managing to stay cool! Despite the heat, the UMTRC is here to make sure that you're updated on the latest in telehealth news and provide you with information about some exciting upcoming events from the National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers (NCTRC).

This month, we saw the passage of the Big Beautiful Bill. As the name implies, the impact of this bill is far-reaching – the exact impact on telehealth usage and coverage is still to be seen. Still, initial assessments suggest that the bill boosts employer-based and private-market telehealth coverage but may leave gaps for Medicare and Medicaid users.

We also saw the release of the Proposed 2026 Physician Fee Schedule (PFS). Our friends at the Center for Connected Health Policy have created a fact sheet that has a thorough breakdown of the proposed changes that will have an impact on telehealth – you can view that fact sheet here.

The NCTRC has been working collaboratively for the past few months on a few different events that are coming to fruition in August! The UMTRC has been excited to be part of the Bridging Rural Communities Events and the Healthcare AI Bootcamp. These two events are helping folks throughout the country get informed on the latest and greatest in the telehealth and digital technology space. Visit their websites to learn more!

We're looking forward to continuing to serve as your telehealth resource center – as always, contact us at info@umtrc.org with any questions, comments or concerns.

Danielle Renckly
Program Coordinator

On behalf of the UMTRC (Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center) Team

BLOG POST

Telehealth and the Proposed 2026 Physician Fee Schedule

"On July 14, 2025, CMS released the proposed 2026 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS), and it brings some notable updates for telehealth and digital health programs. As always, this is a proposal – what is included in the Proposed 2026 PFS may not be approved or may be changed significantly. Regardless, here's what you need to know based on the proposed 2026 PFS—what's changing, what's staying, and how to prepare."

Read More

NEW RESOURCES

The UMTRC is working to update our resource library! Check out some of our improvements including a streamlined engagement hub, consolidated federal resources and a write-up of telehealth payment and coverage parity.

As we expand our resource library, we'd love to hear from you – what additional resources would you like to see from us? Please let us know at info@umtrc.org!

HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

National Parks and Recreation Month

July is National Parks and Recreation Month—a perfect reminder of how access to outdoor spaces and recreation supports whole-person health. From lowering stress and anxiety to encouraging physical activity and social connection, local parks, trails, and green spaces play a vital role in improving both mental and physical well-being.

For many communities, especially in rural or underserved areas, parks can offer accessible, low-cost ways to promote healthy lifestyles. At the intersection of public health and telehealth, recognizing the value of outdoor recreation aligns with a more holistic approach to care—one that goes beyond the clinic to support overall quality of life.

EVENTS

The UMTRC is holding a webinar about the use of telehealth to reduce isolation in our aging populations. Join us on September 9th at 1:00 PM ET. By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the effects of social isolation on the mental health of older adults and the role telehealth can play in addressing these challenges
2. Identify effective telehealth tools and virtual mental health services that can support older adults, including strategies to overcome access barriers such as digital literacy and technology use.
3. Explore community-based approaches and partnerships that use telehealth to reduce isolation and promote emotional well-being among seniors.

Healthcare AI Bootcamp

The Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center has partnered with a number of our fellow telehealth resource centers to bring you the Healthcare AI Boot Camp. The 2025 Healthcare AI Bootcamp offers concise, beginner-friendly sessions designed to help healthcare professionals understand the opportunities, risks, and next steps in AI integration.

Start the journey toward AI readiness.

Learn More Today

More Events

- Bridging Rural Communities: Telehealth Innovations for Appalachia and Beyond – August 1st
- Emergency Department Tele-Triage Considerations – August 6th
- TeleNutrition: Expanding Access to Care – A Telehealth Roundup Webinar – August 7th
- Connecting Rural Health: Telehealth Strategies for Chronic Disease Prevention – August 15th

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PARTNER NEWS

Questions about FQHCs and CHCs? The CCHP has answers!

The Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) telehealth policy category has returned to CCHP's Policy Finder! They began tracking this important category in the Fall of 2022, but had to pause updates last year when the funding for this work expired. However, thanks to renewed support from the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), our partners at CCHP are once again able to offer this resource.

Make sure you take advantage of this valuable resource!

TRC Resources: Proposed 2026 PFS Fact Sheet

From our partners at the Center for Connected Health Policy:

"On July 14, 2025, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released their proposal for the 2026 Physician Fee Schedule (PFS). Each year, the agency uses the PFS to update, change or introduce new policies that will impact the Medicare program for the following year. Unless otherwise stated, the policies will typically go into effect the first of the year. What follows are the proposals that directly relate to telehealth."

Read More

PARTNER NEWS

The Big Beautiful Bill: What Is the Telehealth Impact?

The Big Beautiful Bill, signed into law on July 4, 2025, significantly impacts telehealth coverage through changes to high-deductible health plans (HDHPs) and Health Savings Account (HSA) eligibility. The law permanently allows HDHPs to cover telehealth services before the deductible is met, reinstating and extending a popular COVID-era policy.

This change is retroactive to January 1, 2025, and gives employers the option to reimburse earlier virtual care costs. Beginning in 2026, all Bronze and Catastrophic Marketplace plans will qualify as HDHPs, expanding HSA access and increasing telehealth affordability. The bill also allows fixed-fee direct primary care arrangements—which often include telehealth—to be paired with HSAs, further promoting flexible virtual care models.

However, the bill does not extend Medicare telehealth flexibilities introduced during the public health emergency, such as relaxed geographic or originating site restrictions. It also introduces stricter Medicaid eligibility rules and limits retroactive coverage, which may reduce telehealth access for low-income and rural populations. While a new $50 billion rural health fund aims to soften these impacts, many experts argue it falls short. Overall, the bill boosts employer-based and private-market telehealth coverage but leaves key gaps for Medicare and Medicaid users.

Other News

National
- How The New $50 Billion Rural Health Care Fund Could Fall Short

Indiana
- Planned Parenthood closing Evansville, Ind. center to focus resources on other clinics, telehealth
- Eskenazi Health Center offers free health fairs with screenings and giveaways in Indy

Illinois
- Governor Quinn Announces $1.5 Million to Build Ultra High Speed Broadband Network in Southern Illinois
- Illinois Veterans Face Digital Divide Amid Limited Broadband Access and Unfunded Programs

Michigan
- Michigan Health Department Still Recommends Covid Shot
- Psychiatric demands outweigh resources in Michigan

Ohio
- Ohio Becomes 8th State to OK Virtual Vet Visits Without In-Person Visit First | Insurify
- Ohio doctor pleads guilty to role in telemedicine scheme

Newsletter Information

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