

Telehealth Expansion and Payment Parity Study

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) MEETING 3 NOTES

Date: 2/3/2023 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Welcome from Stephanie Devitt (SDK Communications)

- TAG members in attendance:
 - Jonathan Neufeld (gpTRAC)
 - Leo Bay (Essentia Health)
 - Jean Abraham (UMN)
 - Carrie Suplick Benton (SEGIP)
 - Ryan Jelinek (Hennepin Healthcare)
 - Barb Andreason (Allina Health)
 - Alicia Bauman (Lakewood Health)
 - Karen Amezcua (Blue Cross Blue Shield)

- TAG members not in attendance:
 - Sue Abderholden (NAMI)
 - Jeremy Hanson Willis (Rainbow Health)
 - Bentley Graves (MN Chamber of Commerce)
 - Cara McNulty (CVS Health)

Update on Preliminary Report to Legislature

Update presented by Stefan Gildemeister.

- The MDH Study of Telehealth Expansion and Payment Parity Preliminary Report is currently still in the approval process.
- MDH is coordinating with DHS and will ideally release reports together as they are in similar stages.

MDH Telehealth Study – 2023 Quantitative Analysis Plan

Quantitative Analysis Plan presented by Pam Mink.

MDH will approach quantitative research with three primary activities to address research questions regarding:

- access, quality, outcomes, and equity using data from electronic health records (contracting in progress)
- access, quality, outcomes, and equity using data from the Minnesota All Payer Claims Database (MN APCD) (RFP to be released soon)
- the impact of telehealth use patterns on health care spending and premiums using data from the MN APCD (contracting in progress)

TAG Discussion – TAG questions and perspectives on these approaches:

- Q: Quantitative analysis is challenging. Organizing data to ask questions and asking questions beyond how quantity of telehealth visits is difficult, but essential. Proposals should recognize the complexities of measuring and analyzing telehealth.
 - A: MDH expects vendors to identify areas where data is and is not sufficiently robust and coded for analysis.
- Q: The University of Minnesota has used MN APCD data in the past to study the effectiveness of direct-to-consumer services around conditions such as UTIs and sinusitis. With expansion of telehealth availability, is there a way to capture when providers and health systems made telehealth available to leverage data before and after the telehealth shift?
 - A: MDH is looking at telehealth use in different time periods of before and after COVID-19. EHR data comes from multiple systems and use patterns can be seen in the data. MDH will keep the TAG updated throughout this process.
- Q: Retrospective analysis presents challenges. We have to make assumptions about digital literacy and access, but that information is not in EHR data. Assumptions on race, age, income and more may not have been validated. These limitations should frame the retrospective analysis. Is there room for a randomized control trial using telehealth as an intervention?
- Q: Is MDH seeking data focusing only on outpatient services, or for all telehealth services, including hospital services?
 - A: Although the EHR data and the MN APCD would have information for both inpatient and outpatient services, as currently planned, the analysis of HER data will focus primarily on outpatient conditions, and the MN APCD analyses are still being formulated. There is a gap in understanding and tracking telehealth hospital services. Some measures are looking at chronic conditions. MDH is working with contractors to

find this contrast, as it may not make sense to compare patients who only receive telehealth services to those who only receive in-person care, as many use both.

- A: Patients will also be part of this feedback. Wilder Research interviewed 30 Minnesota patients as part of an MDH study. The Minnesota Health Access Survey (MNHAS) in 2022 had telehealth questions, and more will be added in the future.
- A: MDH is interested in learning more about how health systems are using telehealth in hospital settings.
- A level of analysis that is chronically underrepresented is providers, as patients cannot choose telehealth services if their provider does not provide them. Contractors should break down telehealth by provider, as it's critical to not combine all patients together.
 - It is also critical to determine which providers are part of brick-and-mortar health systems, and which are part of telehealth platforms.
- Many providers engaged in telehealth in 2020 because they had to. Some of these providers have adopted telehealth and moved towards this workflow, and others are avoiding providing telehealth, despite providing it in 2020.
- SEGIP tracks differences between brick-and-mortar and virtual systems based on National Provider Identifiers (NPI). Otherwise, it is assumed they are brick-and-mortar.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) – Office of Broadband Development (OBD) Broadband Expansion Presentation:

Broadband expansion presentation by Bree Maki, Executive Director of OBD.

- Slides are available on the [Telehealth Study website](#), including information on plans and funding.

TAG Discussion on OBD Opportunities:

- Capital funding and investment into broadband is exciting, as this is an important issue, and can be viewed as a social determinant of health.
- One concern is the outcomes of providing broadband without digital literacy training, as digital literacy training is often a significant barrier.
 - A: Digital skills are at the forefront of OBDs work. The Digital Equity Plan will be the framework for future funding 2023 forward regarding digital equity.
- For those broadband does not work for, it is essential to understand complexities of context, culture, healthcare needs, and whether systems are designed for certain patients.
- Expanding access to telehealth can mean increasing broadband requirements. It's important to plan for not only what technology is needed now, but what will prepare us for functional technology in the future.

- A: Minnesota's Border to Border program requires scalable broadband approaches.

TAG Discussion on Planning for the Future of Broadband Access:

- Maps of Minnesota health care and specialty care access would likely overlap with maps of access to brick-and-mortar specialty care. Areas of overlap are likely areas where we underutilize mental health care and are also likely where it's hardest to supply access.
- It's important to consider both digital literacy and health care literacy, which adds complexity. From a research standpoint, it's difficult to determine which telehealth providers offer telehealth services only to local radius versus widely and across borders.
- Besides digital literacy, sustainable affordability and access to devices is important to consider as well. For families living in poverty, navigating sustainable access is difficult.
- For patients who are more comfortable just using telehealth over the phone, converting to video care requires education as well.
- Although there is not yet data on correlation, there are patterns with which patients default towards audio-only telehealth care. Often, if patients lack digital literacy skills, providers will push for phone calls instead.
 - Social determinant screening, particularly for digital literacy, is important.
 - EHR data can be used to track internally, but this doesn't track data well across systems.

Systems and Policy Questions

Presented by Stephanie Devitt.

- Five questions for how to think about changing systems of telehealth were shared.
- A draft one-pager with these policy questions is attached, TAG members are invited to share feedback.

Virtual Workshop Announcement

Announcement by Kristen Ackert.

- MDH is working with the Center for Evidence-Based Policy in Oregon to plan for a Virtual Workshop on Monday, Feb. 27 1-4 CST.
- The workshop will include a panel of researchers on telehealth.
- TAG members should receive a save-the-date next week (Feb. 6-10).
- The event will be recorded as well.

Next Steps

- 2023 TAG meetings will be every other month on Friday mornings.

TAG MEETING NOTES

- Next meeting is Friday, March 31, 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.
- TAG members should have received invitations from Kristen Ackert.
- Slides from this meeting are available on [MDH telehealth website](#) after this meeting.

Minnesota Department of Health
Health Economics Program
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
651-201-4520
telehealthstudy.health@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/healthconomics

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4520