

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 19-76—sSB 1052
Human Services Committee

AN ACT EXPANDING MEDICAID COVERAGE OF TELEHEALTH SERVICES

SUMMARY: Prior law required the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide telehealth coverage (see BACKGROUND), within available state and federal resources, for categories of health care services that the commissioner determined were (1) clinically appropriate, (2) cost effective, and (3) likely to expand access to medically necessary services. This act removes the availability of state and federal resources as a condition for providing such telehealth coverage. It also specifies that, when determining if providing telehealth coverage would likely expand access to medically necessary services, the commissioner must also determine where there is a need for those services to be provided by telehealth.

Under the act, the DSS commissioner may provide coverage of telehealth services regardless of any state regulations that would otherwise prohibit it. DSS may also implement policies and procedures to carry out the act's provisions while adopting them in regulations, provided it posts the policies and procedures on the state eRegulations system before adopting them.

The act requires the commissioner to submit a report to the Human Services and Public Health committees by August 1, 2020, on 1) the health care categories using telehealth services, 2) the cities or regions where the services are being offered, and 3) any related cost savings realized by the state.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

BACKGROUND

Telehealth

Generally, telehealth (also commonly referred to as “telemedicine”) is a method for delivering health care services in which a health care provider uses telecommunication technology to provide health care services to a patient at a different geographic location. The law defines “telehealth” more precisely as delivering health care services through information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient’s physical and mental health. Telehealth does not include the use of fax, audio-only telephone, texting, or e-mail (CGS 19a-906).