

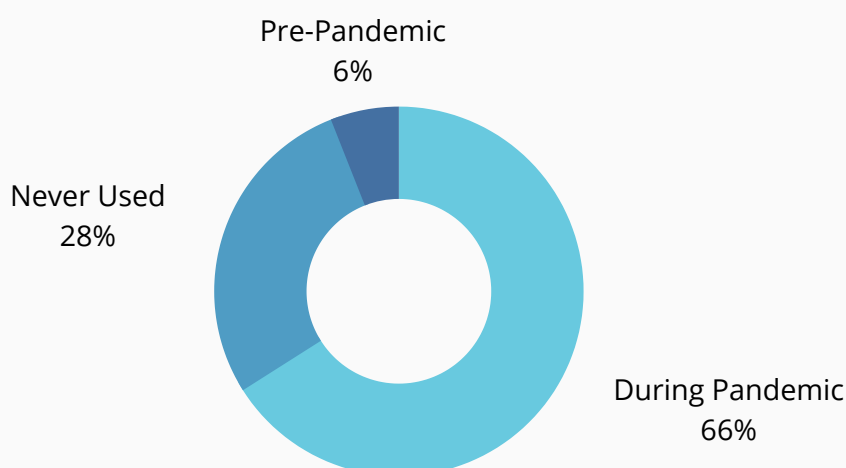
THE PROMISE OF PERSON-CENTERED TELEHEALTH

Boosting Access and Tackling Disparities



What is Telehealth?

Telehealth involves using technology-based approaches—such as computers, tablets or phones—to deliver health services and supports to patients and their caregivers in the comfort of their home and is provided by a broad range of health care professionals. In contrast, telemedicine typically refers to visits conducted virtually by a doctor or other medical provider, and is focused on providing clinical care for medical conditions (1). The convenience of telehealth visits for patients and caregivers has consistently been a strong selling point, yet inequities in technology access and availability persist for many populations.



Two-thirds of over 1,800 low-income patients surveyed by Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) had their very first telehealth appointment during the COVID-19 pandemic (2).

TOP THREE BENEFITS OF TELEHEALTH ACCORDING TO PATIENTS SERVED BY PAF:

- 1 More convenient than in-person visits.
- 2 Saves money on transportation.
- 3 Provides access to care sooner than in-person visits.

– PAF Longitudinal Pandemic Survey, Dec 2020

(1) HealthIT.gov <https://www.healthit.gov/faq/what-telehealth-how-telehealth-different-telemedicine>

(2) Patient Advocate Foundation. Longitudinal Pandemic Survey. December 2020.

Why Telehealth Matters to Patients and Caregivers

The COVID pandemic has boosted popularity and prevalence of telehealth services across communities, care settings and professional disciplines. This, in turn, has spurred encouraging trends in telehealth's propensity to promote, and ultimately achieve, more person-centered, equitable and accessible care for all people with unmet needs.

Recent estimates suggest that social determinants of health (SDOH) account for as much as 55 percent of health outcomes (3). The flexibility offered by telehealth services creates critical opportunities for dismantling access barriers and SDOH harms that cause disparities in health outcomes for marginalized populations and medical shortage areas.

Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) has been an early innovator in providing telehealth services by phone nationally for over 25 years, concentrating on financial and social needs navigation and other assistance to connect patients and families with community resources and safety net supports.

The Opportunity: Supporting Patients' Financial and Social Needs Through Telehealth

PAF's patient experience data clearly demonstrate the value of these telehealth services as an innovative SDOH strategy for minimizing financial hardships and distress that improve health and outcomes in underserved communities and the broader population.

Expanding access to telehealth approaches that identify and address people's basic living needs is an essential aspect of driving quality care and improving quality of life for diverse populations needing support in all care settings. Accordingly, NPAF's policy priorities and associated advocacy strategies link telehealth access, needs assessment and research investment with expanding financial and social needs navigation activities.

NPAF ADVOCATES FOR:

Expanding access to telehealth services to reach all care settings and communities.

Improving insurance benefit design to cover telehealth services, including audio-only coverage policies for addressing financial and social needs.

Integrating financial and social needs navigation telehealth services as a standard of care.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

SHARE STORIES

Amplify patient and caregiver experiences with telehealth.

EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Show how telehealth can connect people to community resources that meet their financial and social needs.

(3) American Academy of Family Physicians' The EveryONE Project: *Addressing Social Determinants of Health Primary Care - team-based approach for advancing health equity* (2018). Accessed Mar 10, 2021.