



## **Eating Disorders Coalition Praises CMS and the Administration for Allowing Medicare to Cover Audio-Only Phone Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 4, 2020) — The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action applauds the decision made by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS), in coordination with the Administration, to expand Medicare coverage to ensure audio-only telephone services are covered during the COVID-19 public health crisis. A copy of the coverage guidance can be read [here](#).

Last month the EDC, in collaboration with 86 stakeholder organizations, sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma advocating for Medicare coverage of audio-only telehealth services. The new guidance now ensures Medicare recipients can access the care they need, including behavioral healthcare, through audio-only technology. Prior regulations only permitted access to telehealth services through technology with videoconferencing capabilities. This prior restriction posed a significant barrier to care for many Medicare recipients, as beneficiaries lack access to technology with video conferencing capabilities or are unable to use the technology effectively.

“This represents a meaningful change in policy for the Medicare population, as many in the elderly, rural, low-income, and disabled communities are unable to access or utilize video-based communication, but are comfortable receiving care over the phone,” said EDC Board President Chase Bannister, MDIV, MSW, LCSW, CEDS. “The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action is thankful for this change in policy, and to our partner organizations who helped make it happen.”

CMS was able to waive the videoconferencing requirement through authority granted to the agency under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) for certain health services, which benefits approximately 60 million Americans.

*The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at [eatingdisorderscoalition.org](http://eatingdisorderscoalition.org).*

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