Telehealth Activity Increases

I wanted to share with you how current events around the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting our collective telehealth mission. Over the last week, we have seen a significant uptick in telehealth use. Together, we are going through unprecedented times. We know that it will be some weeks before anything like "normal" returns. In the meantime, we want to assure you we understand the critically important role telehealth will play during this pandemic. We are making daily progress on what matters most—providing you with access to quality care.

Increased Demand

As health plan members and government employees, you have heard the important messaging to use telehealth over in-person office visits. These messages have been on the Health Plan website and communicated by Office Personnel Management (OPM), your human resource representatives, and during various news briefings to the public, which has translated to an exponential rise in telehealth use nationally. We have seen areas where requests for visits were up more than 2,000% last week. This rise in telehealth use is more significant than the national flu outbreak that occurred during the recent holiday season. Because of increased demand, longer than normal wait times can be expected. Please refer to the **Actions** portion of this communication to find out what our telehealth partners are doing to address these issues.

Clinicians and Providers

Efforts to prepare the nation for more social distancing, and a rethinking of how clinicians and patients should interact, have led to widespread efforts to enlist and onboard clinicians onto telehealth systems. This effort was further accelerated by Washington's messaging to employees to use telehealth as your first defense. Provider enrollment has risen five times in the last three days alone.

Infrastructure and Internet Use

Our telehealth partners are witnessing massive pressures on their operational infrastructure, which includes their national internet infrastructure, as more people turn to high bandwidth applications such as video conferencing and entertainment streaming. These changes in internet traffic patterns are affecting the consistency and predictability of telehealth experiences for both patients and providers.

Actions

What are our telehealth partners doing about it? Their primary focus is consistency and scalability of service. Some of this is accomplished by massive expansion of hardware and connectivity, and some by detection and corrective action on product areas that rattle under this massive load. In the hours and days ahead, they are systematically reinforcing every service area, removing pressure points, and moving from reactive to proactive anticipation of volumes to come. Efforts aren't limited to technology alone. They are bringing timely online capabilities that allow faster provider on-boarding. Clinical, tech, and customer support operations are ramping up in anticipation of members using telehealth as an option for care.

As a reminder you can access telehealth as follows:

High Option members

Virtual visits are available at a reduced copay of $15. Visit Amwell online at https://business.amwell.com/ or call **1-855-818-DOCS** for medical and mental health care.

Consumer Driven Option members

To get started, call **1-855-615-8335** or log in to **myuhc.com®** and choose *Connect with a doctor online*.

Stay Safe and Healthy,
APWU Health Plan
Together. Better Health.