

# *Psychology Advocacy Network*

## **ACTION ALERT**

### **ACT NOW**

#### **Tell your members of congress to expand Medicare coverage of mental health services provided by audio only telephones**

Congress is working on major legislation responding to the COVID-19 epidemic, including an array of provisions and hundreds of billions of dollars in funding to bolster our health care system and provide financial support to businesses and individuals. We are asking for your help to get language included in this to significantly expand access to Medicare telehealth services.

Therefore, as part of our advocacy related to COVID-19 we are asking policymakers to establish Medicare coverage of mental health services provided by telephone. We believe that audio-only telemental health coverage would help protect the health and well-being of Medicare patients. With social distancing likely to be required for many weeks and perhaps months, and with research showing the severe adverse effects of social isolation and loneliness, Medicare patients need to be able to pick up a phone and connect easily with mental health providers. Please take a moment to contact your members of Congress.



A key component prescribed by the CDC to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic is the widespread adoption of social distancing to limit transmission. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened access to telehealth services under Medicare by removing geographic restrictions on coverage and covering services to patients in their own homes. This is an important step. However, many Medicare patients either don't have access to smartphones, don't know how to use video chat capability, or do not have adequate, reliable internet service to support video communications.

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