



MEMORANDUM

TO: Valued Providers

FROM: El Paso Health

DATE: December 18, 2020

RE: Updated COVID-19_ THSteps Medical Checkup Restrictions via Remote Delivery

In response to COVID-19, Texas Health Steps (THSteps) medical checkups require the following federally-mandated components: comprehensive health and developmental history, including physical and mental health development; comprehensive unclothed physical examination; immunizations appropriate for age and health history; laboratory tests appropriate to age and risk, including lead toxicity screening; and health education, including anticipatory guidance. This guidance applies to both new and established patients.

Effective May 7 through January 21, 2021 and to allow for continued provision of THSteps checkups during social distancing related to COVID-19, HHSC is allowing remote delivery of certain components of medical checkups for children over 24 months of age (i.e. starting after the “24 month” checkup). Because some of these requirements (like immunizations and physical exams) require an in-person visit, providers must follow-up with their patients to ensure completion of any components within 6 months of the telemedicine visit.

THSteps Remote Delivery Providers should use their clinical judgment as to what components of the checkup may be appropriate for telemedicine (audio visual) or telephone only delivery. Audio visual delivery is preferred over telephone-only. Physicians (MD and DO), nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and registered nurses may perform remote delivery of these services. Non-physician provider supervision and delegation rules/regulations still apply.

Providers are encouraged to explore different ways of ensuring children over 2 years of age receive age-appropriate vaccines in a timely manner. Providers may find recommended strategies at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) website to include curbside/drive through immunization clinics; <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>.

Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) 3-Day medical exam required by statute for children entering DFPS conservatorship, telemedicine or telephone-only delivery will not be permitted, regardless of age, with one notable exception:



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If a youth requires quarantine or isolation at the time of removal due to COVID-19 exposure or because the youth is known to be infected, remote delivery is allowed. Telemedicine, telehealth, or telephone-only will be allowed in this circumstance to avoid the risk of transmission in a health care setting, and audio visual delivery is preferred, although telephone-only delivery will be permitted when audio visual is not possible. Documentation should detail the circumstances which necessitated remote delivery. Providers should include modifier 95 when submitting a claim.

Remote Delivery Modifier 95 - Providers should bill using the appropriate THSteps checkup codes for the initial visit as is currently required and may also bill for “add-on” codes (e.g. developmental screening, mental health screening, etc.) as customary. Modifier 95 must be included on the claim form to indicate remote delivery. Provider documentation should include the components that were not completed during the initial checkup using COVID-19 as the reason for an incomplete checkup. When the patient is brought into the office within the 6-month timeframe to complete the outstanding components of the visit, providers should bill the THSteps follow-up visit code (99211). Reimbursement will follow current rates for THSteps checkup codes. As a reminder, a patient’s home is not excluded as a THSteps site of service for medical checkups.

Telemedicine or telephone-only delivery of THSteps checkups for children birth through 24 months of age (i.e. from the first newborn checkup through the “24 month” checkup) is not permitted.

Please contact our Provider Relations Department at 915-532-3778 for any questions regarding this information.

Resources:

HHSC: Updated COVID-19 Texas Health Steps Telemedicine FAQs
<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/health/coronavirus-covid-19/medicaid-chip-services-information-providers>

American Academy of Pediatrics:
services.aap.org/en/pages/covid-19-clinical-guidance-q-a/