



Frequently Asked Questions

Optum virtual visits

virtual visits – Optum Telemental Health Program

Q1. What is virtual visits?

A1. virtual visits is the Optum telemental health modality where members can receive routine behavioral health or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services via a HIPAA-secure real-time audio/video conferencing.

Q2. Does Optum administer telemental health benefits?

A2. Yes. Optum considers telemental health as another modality through which members can receive routine behavioral health or EAP services. A virtual visit is not a separate benefit, and member benefits and cost share are the same as for in-person visits. Optum supports both the Site-to-Site model as well as the Direct-to-Consumer model (as permitted by state telehealth regulations).

Q3. Are there any limitations to delivering virtual visits?

A3. Yes. A virtual visit may be limited by federal and state regulations around the provision of telehealth services in the member's state. Providers are expected to know and comply with all state and federal telehealth laws and regulations in the states in which they are licensed.

Q4. Are there any state requirements around virtual visits?

A4. Yes. Some states require that managed care organizations cover telemental health. Optum works with Regulatory and Compliance to ensure all state regulations are met. In addition Optum has a Conditions of Coverage policy specific to virtual visits that also addresses state regulatory requirements. Telemental health providers who offer virtual visits services are required to know and follow all applicable state and federal regulations governing the provision of telemental health services.

Q5. Are there professional organizations that have guidelines on telemental health?

A5. Yes. The American Telemedicine Association (ATA) in collaboration with the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has published approved guidelines in April 2018 called Best Practices in Videoconferencing-based Telemental Health. In March 2017, the ATA also published Practice Guidelines for Telemental Health with Children and Adolescents. These guidelines can be found on the ATA's Resources Page, [here](#).

Q6. Does the delivery of a virtual visit session cost less than a face-to-face session?

A6. No. Optum reimburses providers at the same fee schedule for virtual visit services as for those same services provided during an in-person visit. Optum also reimburses an originating site fee when appropriate, and when code Q3014 is billed by an approved originating site that is contracted for reimbursement of that code.

Network services have the posted virtual visit guidelines, a clinical policy, reimbursement policies and a Network Services Policies and Procedure that defines the operational procedures and use on the provider website portal.

Q7. What current policies and procedures does Optum have for virtual visit services?

A7. Network services have the posted virtual visit guidelines, a clinical policy, reimbursement policies and a Network Services Policies and Procedure that defines the operational procedures and use on the [provider website portal here](#).

Q8. Does Network Services have standards and guidelines on virtual visits where network providers can obtain information?

A8. Network Services outlines the expectations in the virtual visits guidelines on the provider portal. Provider guidelines are currently posted at providerexpress.com.

Q9. How are providers who deliver virtual visits identified in our network?

A9. Network Services currently identifies providers who have attested to following the virtual visits guidelines via an attested expertise indicator of “virtual visits” on the provider’s record. Providers who are delivering virtual visits services, as indicated by submitting claims with the telemental health modifier (GT) or Place of Service code “02”, but have not yet completed a virtual visits attestation form are identified by Network Services through a claims report looking at the GT modifier and/or 02 Place of Service. Network Services tracks this quarterly.

Providers are also identified through typical recruitment efforts and during the credentialing process. All providers interested in providing virtual visits services are required to sign the virtual visits attestation (both prescribers and non-prescribers), which can be found on the virtual visits page of our provider portal, [here](#).

Q10. Are there any specific requirements for the member receiving virtual visits?

A10. Optum expects that all telemental health services are provided in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations governing the provision of telemental health services.

Q11. Are providers who provide virtual visits services credentialed separately?

A11. No. Providers who provide these services follow the standard credentialing criteria for their discipline, but must also sign the virtual visits attestation to remain in compliance with the posted telemental health guidelines.

Q12. How is the provider paid for providing virtual visit services?

A12. Clinicians providing virtual visits are paid according to their contracted fee schedule by submitting a claim, including the GT modifier or 02 Place of Service code (indicating the service was delivered virtually) to denote the encounter as a virtual visit session and not a face-to-face session.

Q13. Does Network Services have a separate contract for network providers that deliver virtual visits? Are the contracts the same rate as face-to-face? If not, what is the rate?

A13. Network Services uses the standard contract template for individual or group agreements. The rate for virtual visit services is the same as for standard face-to-face visits.

Q14. Does Network Services define parameters in the contracts regarding provider setting (e.g., where the provider can deliver virtual visits)?

A14. Yes. These parameters are outlined in the virtual visits guidelines posted on the portal. No Facetime, no store and forward at this time. The virtual visits platform the provider chooses to use must be secure and HIPAA compliant and must be preapproved approved by Optum.

Q15. Does Network Services have an auditing process in place for the delivery of virtual visits services?

A15. Yes. The process to audit virtual visits providers is the same as for other providers. Audits may be triggered by quality of care issues, complaints, incidents, high volume, etc. In addition, Optum may perform routine audits of all providers, including virtual visits providers, at our discretion and according to the Provider Agreement.

Q16. Who is contacted when there is a need for virtual visits?

A16. Contact your Network Manager.

Q17. Who is contacted with any further questions about delivering virtual visits?

A17. Contact your Network Manager.