

# Maintain Access to Teleservices for Assessments and Service Coordination

## Give Medicaid Families a Personal Choice in How They Want to Access Services

**What's the problem:** Last session, the Legislature passed [HB 4](#), allowing MCOs to use telehealth to conduct service coordination assessments and visits. **However, the proposed rule by HHSC lacks the full flexibility intended by the Legislature and limits telehealth use in Medicaid.**

While HB 4 mandated in-person visits for some initial assessments, HHSC expanded the in-person mandate in their proposed rules to also include all annual reassessments and any assessments that may result in a change of resources to all return in-person. Further, only individuals who receive in-person assessments that year may waive in-person service coordination visits.

The relevant section of HB 4, codified in Government Code Sec. 533.039(e), states:

“A Medicaid managed care organization shall... conduct: (1) at least one in-person visit with the recipient to make an initial waiver eligibility determination; and (2) additional in-person visits with the recipient if necessary, **as determined by the managed care organization.**”

### Why it matters:

- Mandating all annual assessments and any change in condition assessments to be in-person increases costs to the state.
- It will also force MCOs to hire more nurses, further exacerbating the nursing workforce shortage.
- Lastly, it imposes additional burdens on Medicaid families who may agree that telehealth is preferable to an in-person visit in their homes.

**Bottomline:** Medicaid families should have the personal option to use telehealth for service coordination visits and their ongoing assessments.

- There is no evidence that conducting assessments via telehealth jeopardizes the safety or welfare of patients who receive them. In reality, many Medicaid members will be put at greater risk if in-person visits are required.
- Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Texas MCOs have repeatedly demonstrated that telehealth is an effective and safe tool for service coordination throughout the COVID-19 crisis.
- Over 80% of STAR Kids families, including MDCP families, have been proactively choosing telehealth for service coordination. The state should not eliminate this personal option and force MCO staff into members' family homes when there is evidence and experience that telehealth is safe and effective.
- There is no federal law or CMS guidance that prohibits telehealth assessments and visits.
- The State Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Committee also recommends that Medicaid families have the option to choose telehealth for service coordination assessments and visits.