



Audio-Only Telehealth Improves Americans' Access to Care

Congress must take action to protect and strengthen telehealth services. Millions of Americans 65+ and the most vulnerable Americans with disabilities, who rely on Medicare Advantage, also rely on expanded telehealth services to receive timely care, especially during critical times like the COVID-19 crisis.

In the wake of COVID-19, Medicare Advantage plans took decisive [action](#) by expanding telehealth services, including allowing for audio-only telehealth, or doctor appointments by telephone and not video. Telehealth helps ensure patients can receive ongoing care for chronic, physical, and behavioral health services, while protecting patients and health care workers from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19. [Audio-only telehealth](#) appointments are especially critical to ensuring that Medicare Advantage members who don't have access to the technologies required for more advanced telehealth options can still get the care they need.

However, the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are far-reaching and could lead to a decrease in Medicare Advantage funding, raising costs and reducing benefits, including telehealth services.

"Cutting Medicare Advantage amid the public health crisis would be devastating for millions of Americans most vulnerable to COVID-19."



Medicare Advantage delivers high-quality, affordable coverage for people on a low income, with about **40% of Medicare Advantage enrollees** earning less than \$25,000 a year. Many seniors in [rural and urban communities](#) still struggle with a lack of access to broadband Internet services. Others may be unable to access video services due to physical limitations, these Americans must not be excluded from the benefits of telehealth for lack of a video connection to their doctor.

Congress can make sure these Americans are not left behind during the COVID-19 crisis by supporting the *Ensuring Parity in MA for Audio-Only Telehealth Act (S. 150)* and the *Ensuring Parity in MA and PACE for Audio-Only Telehealth Act (H.R. 2166)*. These bipartisan proposals will reduce health disparities due to unequal access to health technology and video telehealth platforms. This critical legislation will also ensure audio-only telehealth continues to be an effective source of health care for Medicare Advantage enrollees and support the doctors and providers who care for them.

The Coalition for Medicare Choices will continue to advocate for Congress to pass legislation to protect audio-only telehealth and prevent harmful cuts to Medicare Advantage during the COVID-19 crisis. The more than 26 million Americans and people with disabilities deserve better services, better access to care, and better value.