ARIZONA HEALTH CARE COST CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

Telehealth Advisory Committee Biannual Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2026

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Dr. Roger Willcox, Medical Director, who also noted that the session was being recorded.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Dr. Willcox acknowledged the contributions of former committee chair Dr. Morenz and her role in advancing telehealth initiatives.
- Overview of the committee's purpose, established under House Bill 2454 (2021), to support telehealth development and policy in Arizona.
- Noted ongoing vacancies and encouraged recruitment to fill unoccupied committee positions.

Introductions

- AHCCCS (Dr. Roger Willcox)
- AHCCCS (Jeanette Datcher)
- Arizona Commission of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (Nikki Soukup)
- Arizona Occupational Therapy Association (Sue Dahl-Popolizio)
- AZ Autism United (Amy Enriquez)
- AZ State Board of Nursing (Manny Romo)
- GlobalMed (Joel Barthelemy)
- Mayo Clinic (Praneetha Elugunti)
- Midwestern University / AZ Osteopathic Medical Association (Dr. Shannon Scott)
- The CORE Institute / AZ Medical Association (Dr. William Thompson)
- Touchstone Health Services (Kimberly Egan)

Federal & State Telehealth Policy Updates

- CMS / Medicare Updates
  - Telehealth flexibilities initially expired in October 2025 but were later reinstated.
  - Flexibilities are currently extended through December 31, 2027.
  - Continued coverage:
    - Audio-only services
    - Expanded provider eligibility
  - Controlled substance prescribing via telehealth extended through end of 2026.

Federal & State Telehealth Policy Updates (Cont)

- Arizona Medicaid (AHCCCS)
  - AHCCCS maintained telehealth coverage without interruptions during federal uncertainty.
  - Decision made to maintain reimbursement parity (especially for video visits).
  - Telehealth reimbursement remained revenue-neutral, avoiding rate reductions.

Telehealth Utilization & Trends

- Telehealth usage remains stable post-pandemic, with slight expected declines compared to peak levels.
- Most common use cases:
  - Behavioral health (e.g., anxiety, autism, ADHD)
  - Chronic conditions (e.g., hypertension, diabetes)
  - Substance use disorders
- Urban areas show higher usage; rural access disparities persist.

Emerging Telehealth Modalities

- Asynchronous Telehealth
  - Increasing adoption in:
    - Remote patient monitoring
    - Remote therapeutic monitoring
    - Store-and-forward specialty consults
  - Emphasis on proper documentation and billing practices.
- Audio-Only Services
  - Recognized as critical for underserved and vulnerable populations lacking access to technology.
  - Strong committee support for continued coverage.

Key Discussion: CPT Code 92609

- Background
  - CPT 92609 (speech-generating device therapy, including programming and training) was previously closed due to low utilization.
- Issue Presented
  - Amy Enriquez proposed reinstating the code for telehealth use, particularly for:
    - Caregiver training
    - Follow-up support
  - Highlighted improved outcomes when caregivers are trained to use communication devices.

Key Discussion: CPT Code 92609 (Cont)

- Committee Discussion
  - Benefits of telehealth:
    - Increased access for rural patients
    - Reduced burden on families
    - Improved adherence and device utilization
  - Barriers to previous utilization:
    - Limited awareness among providers
    - Focus on evaluations over training
  - Suggested outreach through professional associations to promote use.

Key Discussion: CPT Code 92609 (Cont)

- Recommendation/Motion
  - Committee reached consensus to:
    - Recommend reinstating CPT 92609
    - Limit telehealth use to caregiver training and follow-up
    - Require initial programming to be conducted in person

Open Forum Discussion

- Key discussion points:
  - Continued support for audio-only services to address equity gaps.
  - Concern regarding low telehealth utilization in rural counties.
  - Clarification that utilization data may reflect provider location rather than patient location, potentially underrepresenting rural use.
  - Recognition of ongoing efforts to expand technology access in rural areas.

Action Items

- Submit formal recommendation to reconsider CPT 92609 with telehealth limitations.
- Explore improved outreach strategies to increase provider awareness and usage of CPT codes.
- Investigate methods to better measure rural telehealth utilization (patient vs. provider location).
- Continue monitoring federal telehealth policy changes approaching the 2027 expiration.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:57 am.