



Protect Beneficiary Permanent Access to Telehealth by Qualified Rehabilitation Professionals

Members of the National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies (NARA) see telehealth as a value-added option that helps Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries receive timely, consistent rehabilitation care when travel, mobility, or other barriers make in-person visits difficult. Telehealth has strengthened access, equity, and system efficiency across rehabilitation therapy. Providers have effectively used telehealth since March 2020, and Congress has now extended key telehealth flexibilities through December 31, 2027. It is critical to support legislation permanently authorizing telehealth for qualified providers, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists, so beneficiaries can continue to receive the right care at the right time in the right setting.

The Value of Telehealth in Rehabilitation Therapy

- Reduces overall healthcare spending by helping prevent avoidable ER visits, hospitalizations, and readmissions through earlier intervention, stronger follow-through, and timely care adjustments.
- Improves safety and function at home by enabling real-time observation of the patient's living environment, identifying fall risks, equipment needs, and practical modifications that traditional outpatient visits often can't capture.
- Expands access and reduces disparities for rural and underserved communities for patients who cannot reliably travel supporting better outcomes for stroke recovery, chronic pain, neurological conditions, and post-acute needs.
- Strengthens patient and caregiver engagement through skilled, therapist-led supervision and real-time clinical progression of the plan of care, improved adherence, and better day-to-day function.

Evidence Supporting Telehealth by Rehabilitation Providers

- Current literature demonstrates telehealth provides clinically equivalent outcomes to traditional in person therapy and can be a cost-effective alternative to traditional rehab while expanding access especially in remote or resource-limited areas while reducing costs and supporting better adherence¹:
 - Post Stroke Patients in Physical Therapy²
 - Efficacy of Telerehabilitation for Improving Daily Activity Performance for Stroke Survivors OT³
 - The Value of Telepractice in Speech-Language Pathology⁴
 - Telehealth Versus Face-to-Face Delivery of Speech Language Pathology Services⁵

Request for Support: Expand Permanent Telehealth Access

We request support for **HR 1614**, introduced by Representatives Mike Thompson (CA-04), Mike Kelly (PA-16), and Adrian Smith (NE-03). In the Senate, we request support for **S 3834** reintroduced by Senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Tina Smith (D-MN). Both bills would permanently expand the list of authorized telehealth providers under Medicare to include qualified physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists. It represents a critical step toward making telehealth a lasting, accessible, and equitable component of healthcare delivery.

While we recognize and support the broader goals of the CONNECT for Health Act, the current language does **not** permanently authorize rehabilitation therapy providers to deliver care via telehealth. In contrast, HR 1614 and S 3834 would ensure long-term access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries particularly those in rural, underserved, and mobility-limited populations by fully recognizing therapy professionals as qualified telehealth providers.

NARA is the trade association representing 100+ organizations consisting of over 100,000 healthcare professionals dedicated to providing a multitude of skilled rehabilitation therapy services to individuals in a variety of settings including inpatient, outpatient, skilled care, assisted living, educational systems, industry/occupational health.

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11911901/?utm>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39172060/>

³ <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2026.051184>

⁴ <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/ebp/dov/value-of-telepractice-in-speech-language-pathology.pdf>

⁵ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12408928/>