



Teledentistry FAQs for Medi-Cal Dental Providers During Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Restrictions

For the duration of the statewide COVID-19 shelter-in-place order, Medi-Cal dental providers equipped to do so are encouraged to use teledentistry as an alternate modality for the provision of select dental services.

What is teledentistry?

Telehealth refers to a broad variety of technologies and tactics to deliver virtual medical, health, and education services. Telehealth is not a specific service, but a collection of means to enhance care and educational delivery. Teledentistry refers to the use of telehealth systems and methodologies in dentistry. Teledentistry can include patient care delivery using, but not limited to, the following modalities:

- **Live video (synchronous):** Live, two-way interaction between a person (patient, caregiver, or provider) and a provider using audiovisual telecommunications technology.
- **Store-and-forward (asynchronous):** Transmission of recorded health information (for example, radiographs and photographs of patients) through a secure electronic communications system to a provider, who uses the information to evaluate a patient's condition or render a service outside of a real-time or live interaction.

Under Medi-Cal Dental, who can perform teledentistry?

Medi-Cal enrolled dentists and allied dental professionals (under the supervision of a dentist) may render limited services via synchronous/live transmission teledentistry, so long as such services are within their scope of practice.

Can I use my smart-phone or a video conferencing service like Skype?

Yes. Telephones, tablets, laptops, and personal computers that have audio and video capabilities are appropriate for virtual evaluations. For more information on Health Insurance Portability and Protection Act (HIPAA) compliance guidelines, please visit the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) website [here](#).

Has the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) made any exceptions for teledentistry during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. As announced in Provider Bulletin [Volume 36, Number 10](#), effective March 25, 2020,



DHCS will allow a temporary teledentistry exception for consultation services by telephone or video to be provided to remote Medi-Cal members. This policy will be in effect until further notice. In utilizing this temporary flexibility, enrolled Medi-Cal dental providers should follow the guidelines below:

- Current Dental Terminology (CDT) code D9430: Used for live streaming video or telephone with a Medi-Cal patient with oral health issues in lieu of an in-person office visit. Providers would be reimbursed the Schedule of Maximum Allowances (SMA) rate for CDT code D9430, in addition to the teledentistry payment for CDT code D9995 (code D9999 on or before May 15, 2020).
- Documentation of the consultation should be noted on the claim document in the comments section. For example:
 - Patient is having discomfort
 - Patient has a concern that was to be discussed at the recall appointment – but that appointment has now been postponed due to COVID-19.
- CDT code D9430, as part of teledentistry during COVID-19 flexibilities, is only allowable for a conversation between the Medi-Cal member and the Medi-Cal provider about oral health issues as their chief complaint.
- CDT code D9430 should not be billed for conversations with office staff about scheduling or rescheduling appointments.

What teledentistry procedures can I perform?

Live Video (Synchronous)

Limited Medi-Cal dental services may be rendered via synchronous/live transmission (live video) teledentistry when billing CDT code D9995 for dates of service on or after May 16, 2020. For dates of service on or before May 15, 2020, providers should use CDT code D9999 (or procedure D0999) when billing for synchronous teledentistry. The following is Medi-Cal's teledentistry policy for synchronous/live transmissions:

- CDT code D9995 is a per-minute, \$.24/minute procedure payable up to 90 minute.
- CDT code D9995 is for synchronous, meaning any telephone call or video call/chat, teledentistry encounter.
- CDT code D9995 is for Medi-Cal patient-initiated contact with a Medi-Cal dental provider. This code is not for:
 - Dental assistant time
 - Dental hygienist time
 - Provider-initiated calls to the patient
 - Time spent contacting pharmacies on a patient's behalf



- D9995 should be billed with the number of minutes noted in the “Quantity” field of the claim, or the documentation should clearly state the number of minutes being requested.
 - PROCEDURE D9995 TELEDENTISTRY- SYNCHRONOUS; REAL-TIME ENCOUNTER
 1. Written documentation for payment shall include the number of minutes that the transmission occurred.
 2. Payable once per date of service per patient, per provider up to a maximum of 90 minutes.

During COVID-19 shut-downs, Medi-Cal dental providers are able to use synchronous/live transmission (live video) teledentistry as a method of care to comply with statewide social distancing measures.

Store-and-Forward (Asynchronous)

Limited Medi-Cal dental services may be rendered via asynchronous store-and-forward using CDT code D9996, which identifies the services as teledentistry. CDT code D9996 is not reimbursable; instead, the billing dental provider would be reimbursed based upon the applicable CDT procedure code to be paid according to the Schedule of Maximum Allowance (SMA). The following CDT codes may be billed under Medi-Cal’s teledentistry policy for asynchronous store and forward:

- D0120: Periodic oral evaluation — established patient
- D0150: Comprehensive oral evaluation – new or established patient
- D0210: Intraoral — complete series of radiographic images
- D0220: Intraoral — periapical first radiographic image
- D0230: Intraoral — periapical each additional radiographic image
- D0240: Intraoral — occlusal radiographic image
- D0270: Bitewing — single radiographic image
- D0272: Bitewings — two radiographic images
- D0274: Bitewings — four radiographic images
- D0330: Panoramic radiographic image
- D0350: Oral/Facial photographic images

Can I bill CDT code D9440 as a teledentistry procedure during COVID-19?

No. CDT code D9440 is an in-person-visit code to be used after normal business hours with the usual documentation. There are no changes to this code in the COVID-19 context.



Do I need to submit photographs with a teledentistry claim?

No. Photographs are not required to support teledentistry procedures under the Medi-Cal Dental Program and should not be submitted with a teledentistry claim.

Can I submit a teledentistry claim for a call that I initiate?

No. Claims for synchronous/live transmission (live video) teledentistry are payable only if the Medi-Cal member initiates the call.

Can I submit a teledentistry claim for time spent calling a Medi-Cal patient's prescription into a pharmacy?

No. Synchronous/live transmission (live video) teledentistry is a live, two-way interaction between a person (patient, caregiver, or provider) and a provider. Therefore, teledentistry claims submitted for calls to a pharmacy will be denied.

Should I bill the American Dental Association (ADA) recommended codes recently put forth in the ADA's teledentistry guidance?

No. Medi-Cal dental providers may only bill CDT codes D9999, D0999, and D9430 (effective March 25, 2020) for synchronous/live transmission (live video) teledentistry. As noted above, CDT code D9995 will replace CDT codes D9999 and D0999 after May 16, 2020.

Is there specific teledentistry guidance for Safety Net Clinics?

Yes. Safety Net Clinics (Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, Tribal 638 Clinics) should refer to the [telehealth billing guidance](#) released by DHCS on March 24, 2020.

Where can I find more information about Medi-Cal Dental's teledentistry policy?

For more information about Medi-Cal Dental's teledentistry and billing for teledentistry guidelines, please refer to the Provider Handbook [Section 4 -Treating Beneficiaries](#), pages 4-14 and 4-15. Teledentistry resources can also be found on the Medi-Cal Dental website [here](#).