

Teledentistry guidance

Overview

Teledentistry is the delivery of dental care while the patient and the dentist are in different locations.

At its regular meeting on January 10, 2020, the S.D. Board of Dentistry discussed the current statutory framework pertaining to teledentistry. Current regulations, which went into effect in 2015, specifically outline that dentistry provided via teledentistry is the practice of dentistry. Licensees and registrants must meet the applicable standard of care for all dental services that are provided, including those provided via teledentistry.

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the practice of dentistry, Delta Dental of South Dakota (DDSD) is providing this initial guidance regarding the use of teledentistry in the delivery of limited, problem-focused examinations. DDSD expects to expand this guidance on teledentistry in the future.

Services covered

This guidance is effective beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. DDSD reserves the right to update this guidance as needed and will communicate any modifications to this guidance (e.g. addition of codes covered) by email and on the DDSD website www.deltadentalsd.com.

DDSD will cover claims for services conducted using teledentistry for the following diagnostic services:

- D0140: Limited oral exam

The services must be of sufficient audio and visual fidelity and clarity to be functionally equivalent to a face-to-face encounter. Reimbursement for teledentistry is equal to reimbursement for face-to-face encounters.

Billing

When reporting a service completed via teledentistry, providers are certifying the services rendered to the patient were functionally equivalent to a face-to-face encounter.

Providers should include the following codes on claims for services completed using teledentistry:

- D9995 – Teledentistry, synchronistic; real-time encounter
- D9996 – Teledentistry, asynchronistic; information stored and forwarded to dentist for subsequent review

These codes are reported in addition to other procedures delivered on the date of service. Fees for teledentistry are considered to be part of the service completed and will not be reimbursed separately. Fees for teledentistry codes are not billable to the patient.

As always, regardless of reimbursement, include your usual and customary charge for the code on your claim.

Documentation

DDSD will treat claims for services completed by teledentistry the same as a face-to-face encounter of the same code.

While DDSD does not require any specific teledentistry documentation, providers must document services completed by teledentistry in the same manner as those conducted in a face-to-face encounter. This includes documentation of details about the date and time, mode of service delivery, service provided, diagnoses, etc. in the patient's clinical notes.