



# HRSA Rural Health Update

## SORH New Directors Orientation

April 29, 2021

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**Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People**



# Office for the Advancement of Telehealth



- HRSA is home to the **Office for the Advancement of Telehealth**:
- Serves across HHS and coordinates with other key federal partners to leverage telehealth to improve access, enhance outcomes, and support clinicians and patients
- Promotes the use of telehealth technologies for health care delivery, education, and health information services
- Provides funding for direct services, research, and technical assistance in the field of telehealth



# Benefits of Telehealth



- **Provider Benefits:**
- Improves workforce development
- Improves care delivery
- Serves more patients
- Lowers no show rate



## Patient Benefits:

- Increases access to care
- Reduces travel
- Less wait time to receive services



## Payer Benefits:

- Reduces cost for transport
- More timely care produces better outcomes and lowers cost



# Barriers to Advancing Telehealth



- **Reimbursement:** Varies by state and payer. Pre-COVID, geographic restrictions and restrictions on technologies limited health care providers



- **Licensure:** Pre-COVID, health care providers must be licensed in state where patient is located. Multi-state licensure compacts are working on a solution



- **Prescribing:** Pre-COVID, practitioners followed the Ryan Haight Act on how telehealth may be used to prescribe controlled substances



- **Credentialing:** the originating sites rely on the credentialing and privileging decisions of the distant site hospital for telehealth practitioners



- **Broadband:** patients and clinics without adequate broadband are not able to access telehealth services

# Telehealth Policy Changes During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency



- **Reimbursement:**
- Medicare: flexibilities with location, eligible services, eligible providers, cost-sharing, licensing, modality, and supervision of providers
- Medicaid
- Private insurers



- **Licensure:** Almost every state has modified licensure requirements/renewals policies for providers, including out-of-state requirements for telehealth



- **Prescribing controlled substances:** A practitioner can prescribe a controlled substance to a patient using telemedicine even if the patient is not at a hospital or clinic registered with the DEA



- **HIPAA:** HHS Office of Civil Rights empowered covered providers to use widely available communications applications without risk of penalties

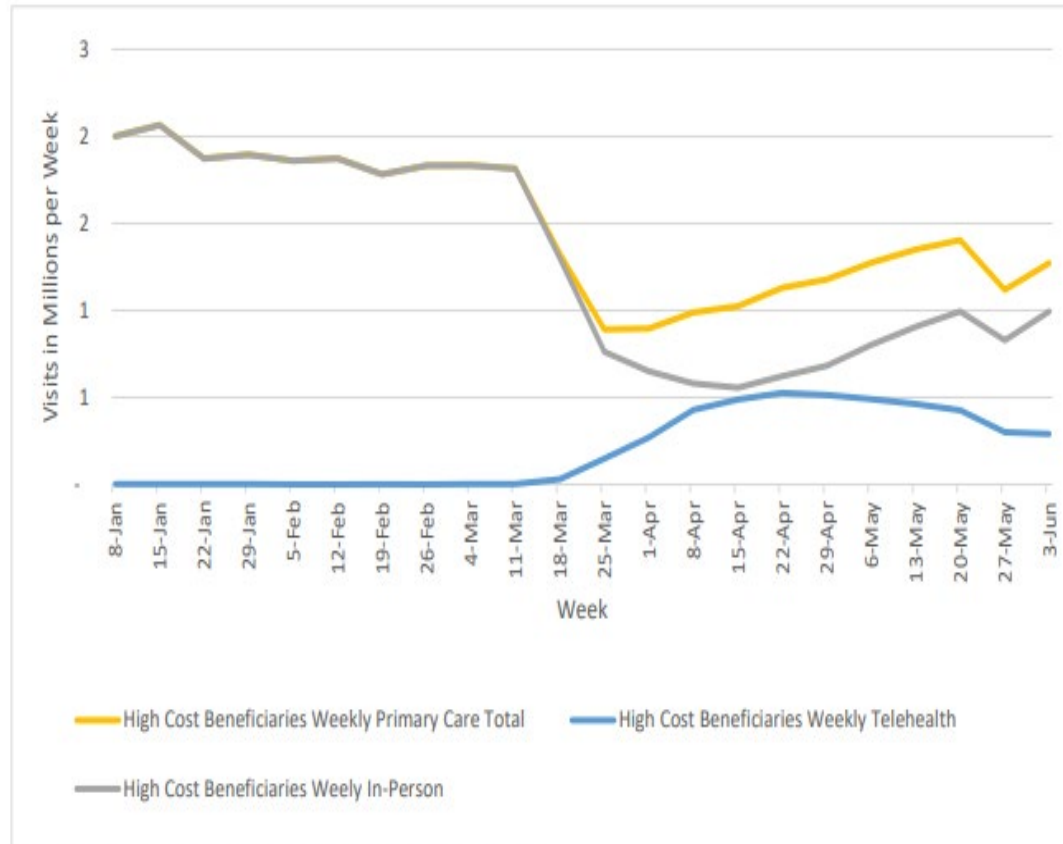


- **Federally Qualified Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics:** Provide services as a distant site for any service that Medicare has approved to be furnished via telehealth



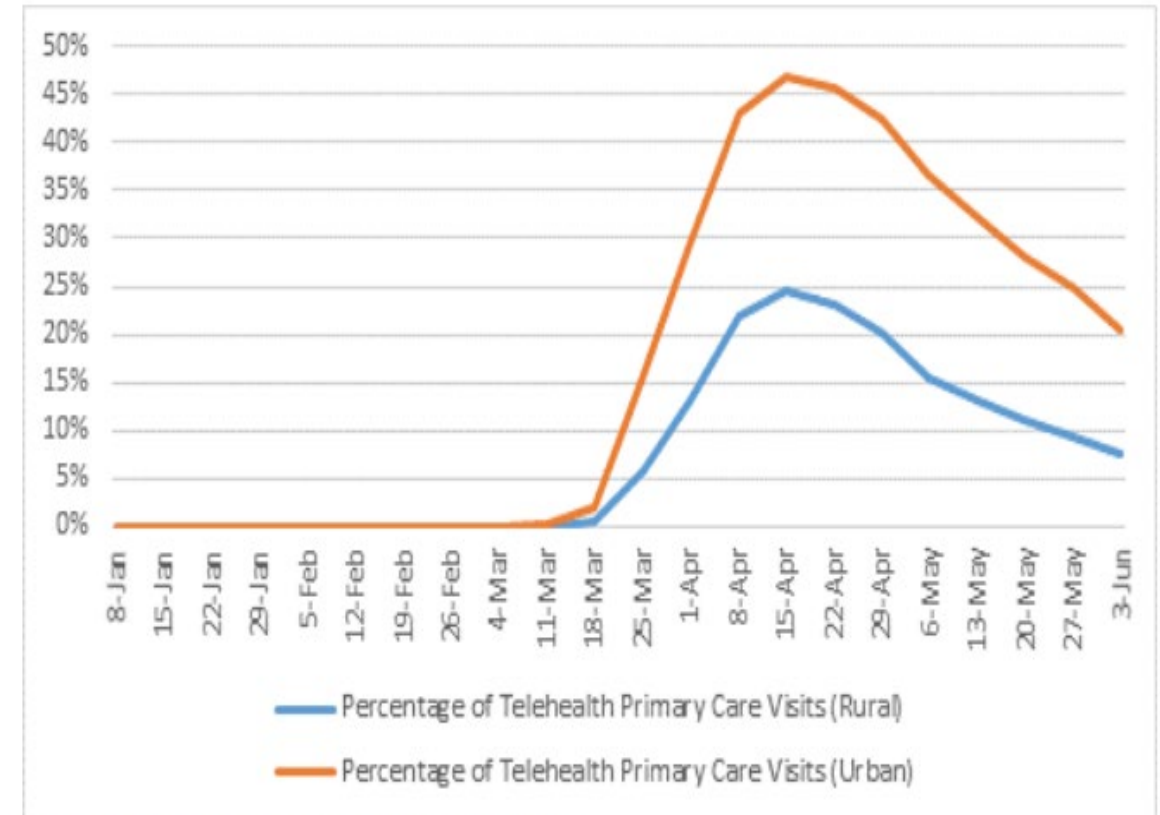
# The Rise and Fall of Virtual Visits and Total Visits

Figure 3. Primary Care Visits for High Cost FFS Medicare Beneficiaries (visits in millions per week)



Source: Medicare claims data up to June 3<sup>rd</sup>, available as of June 16.

Figure 4. Telehealth Weekly Visits as a Percentage of Total FFS Medicare Primary Care Visits in Urban and Rural Counties



Source: Medicare claims data up to June 3<sup>rd</sup>, available as of June 16.



# Telehealth Investments During the COVID-19 Pandemic



- **Millions Invested Across HRSA Programs**
  - \$15 million for provider telehealth training
  - \$15 million to key areas in maternal and child health
  - \$11.6 million to HRSA-funded Telehealth Resource Centers
  - \$5 million to assist telehealth clinicians on licensure and credentialing
  - \$8 million to support telehealth broadband



# Telehealth.HHS.gov



- **Telehealth.HHS.gov**
  - The trusted, timely, and one-stop resource for both patients and providers for everything they need to know about telehealth

**Telehealth.HHS.gov**

**Telehealth: Health care from the safety of our homes.**

#telehealth #telemedicine



# Office for the Advancement of Telehealth

## Telehealth Resource Centers



- The purpose of the **Telehealth Resource Center Program** is to support delivery of telehealth technical assistance.
- **National Policy Telehealth Resource Center**
- **National Technology Telehealth Resource Center**
- **Regional Telehealth Resource Centers**

In 2020, the Telehealth Resource Centers had over 10,000 technical assistance inquiries, a 350% increase over 2019



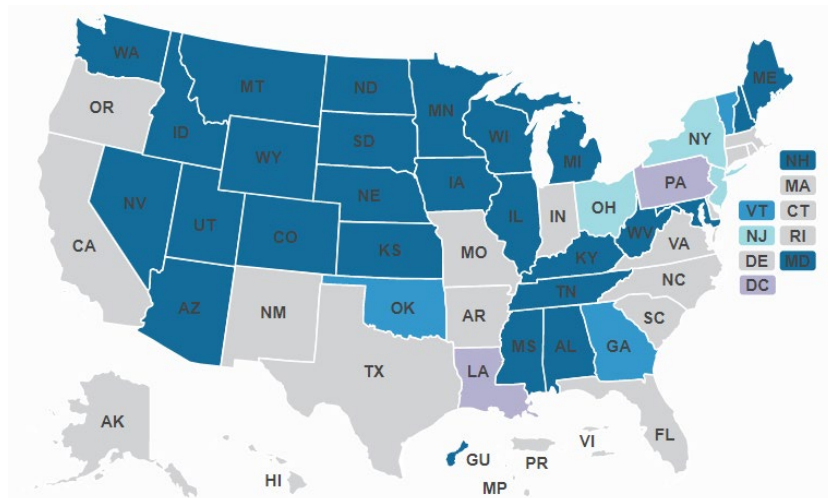
# Office for the Advancement of Telehealth

## Licensure Portability Grant Program



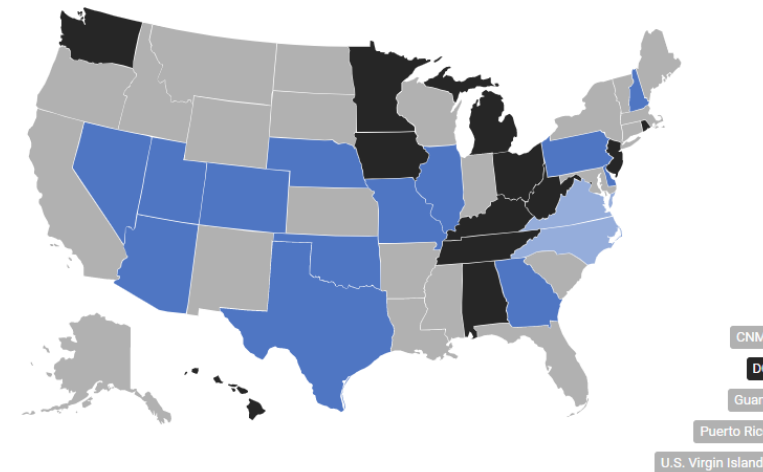
- The **Licensure Portability Grant Program** provides support for State professional licensing boards to carry out programs under which licensing boards of various States cooperate to develop and implement State policies that will reduce statutory and regulatory barriers to the provision of health care services through telemedicine technology.

### Interstate Medical Licensure Compact



- Light Blue = Compact Legislation Introduced
- Dark Blue = IMLC Member State serving as SPL processing applications and issuing licenses\*
- Medium Blue = IMLC Member State non-SPL issuing licenses\*
- Grey = IMLC Passed; Implementation In Process or Delayed\*

### PSYPACT



#### Map Key

- Dark Blue = States with Enacted PSYPACT Legislation
- Light Blue = States with Enacted but not Effective PSYPACT Legislation
- Black = States with Pending PSYPACT Legislation



# Office for the Advancement of Telehealth

## Upcoming Funding Opportunities



- **Evidence-Based Telehealth Network Program**

- The purpose of the FY 2021 **Evidence-Based Telehealth Network Program** is to use telehealth networks to improve direct-to-consumer telehealth services in rural and frontier communities and conduct evaluations of those efforts to establish an evidence-base for assessing the effectiveness of direct-to-consumer telehealth care for patients, providers, and payers.
- Notice of Funding Opportunity Issued: January 12, 2021
- Application Closed: April 2, 2021
- Budget: \$4.9 million to fund up to 14 grants



- **Telehealth Technology Enabled Learning Program**

- The purpose of the FY 2021 **Telehealth Technology Enabled Learning Program** is to assist connecting specialists at academic medical centers with primary care providers in rural and underserved areas, providing evidence-based training and support to help treat patients with complex conditions in their communities.
- Notice of Funding Opportunity Available: Estimated release date is summer 2021
- Application Due Date: Estimated application due date is summer 2021
- Budget: \$4.5 million to fund up to 9 grants



# Current Telehealth Activities in HRSA

## Overview



- Currently approximately **3,876 awards** include a telehealth component

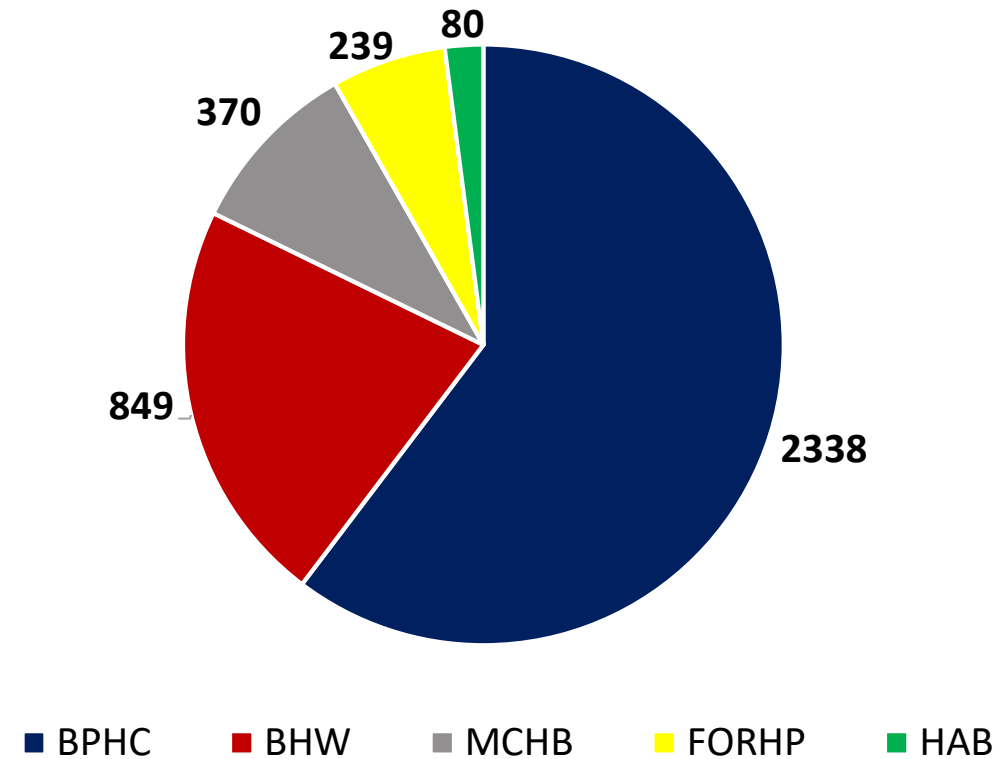


- **50 states and 9 federal districts/territories** have awards



- **Target populations** include rural, tribal and underserved communities, low-income populations, and health care providers

HRSA FY2020 Awards with Telehealth



# Current Telehealth Activities in HRSA

## Telehealth Use



**Telehealth activities** include direct clinical services, infrastructure development, workforce training, and distance learning

### HRSA FY20 Awards with Telehealth by Telehealth Use





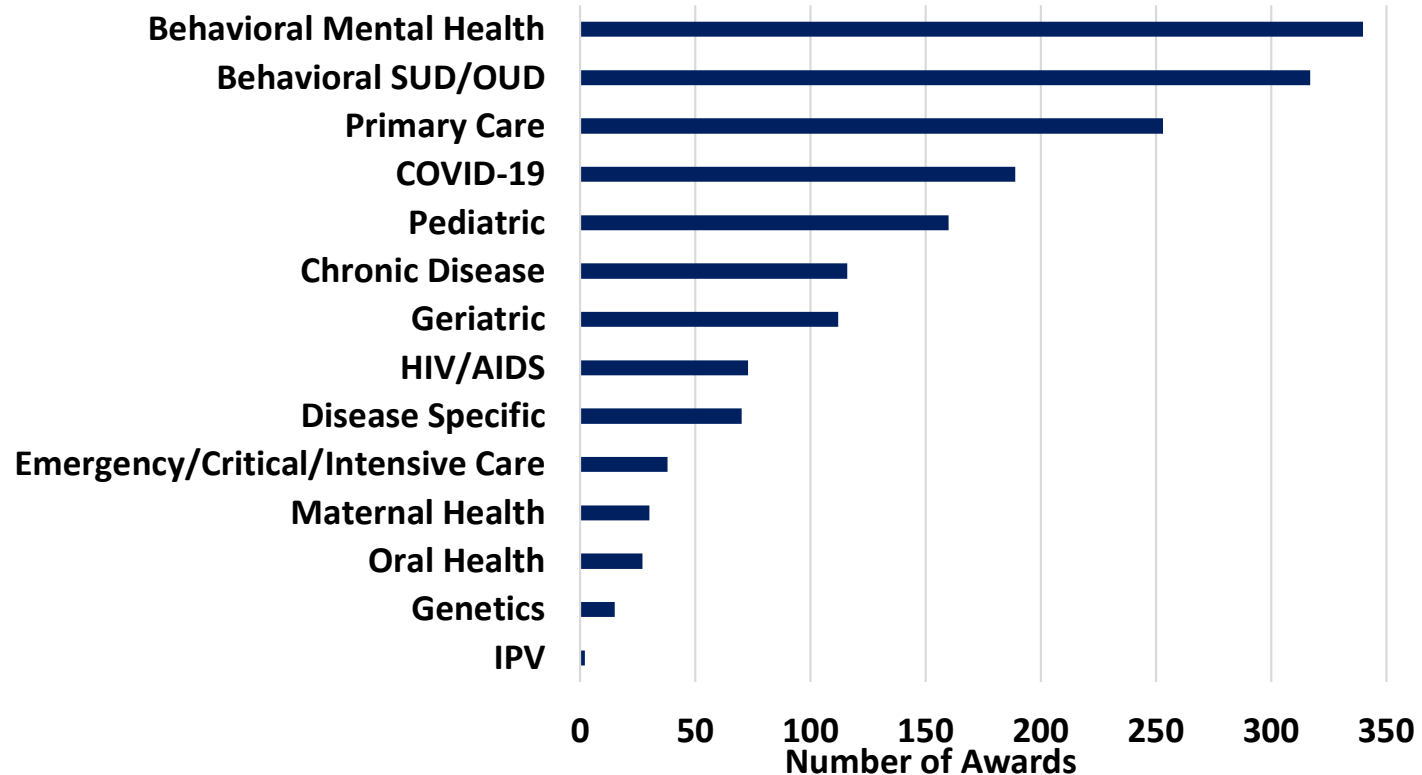
# Current Telehealth Activities in HRSA

## Telehealth Focus



**Telehealth focus areas** include COVID-19, primary care, behavioral/mental health, and behavioral substance use disorders/opioid use disorders

**HRSA FY20 Awards with Telehealth by Telehealth Focus**



# HRSA and the Future of Telehealth



- **2020 has shown us:**
  - Telehealth provides significant benefits
  - Telehealth has played a key role in reducing the disruption to health care services
  - Telehealth has been adopted across a range of specialties
  - Improving access to affordable broadband services is the foundation to improving access to telehealth services

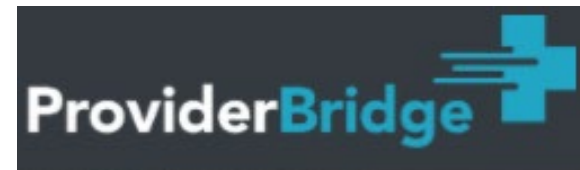


**HRSA's vision is to continue to work across HHS to leverage telehealth activities in order to advance the field of telehealth.**

# HHS Telehealth Resources

- **Telehealth.HHS.gov**  
<https://telehealth.hhs.gov/>
- **Telehealth Resource Centers**  
<https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/>
- **ProviderBridge**  
<https://www.providerbridge.org/>
- **Multi-Discipline Licensure Resource Project**  
<https://licensureproject.org/>
- **Rural Telehealth Research Center**  
<https://ruraltelehealth.org/>
- **RHIHub**
- <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/>

TELEHEALTH.HHS.GOV



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[www.HRSA.gov](http://www.HRSA.gov)



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