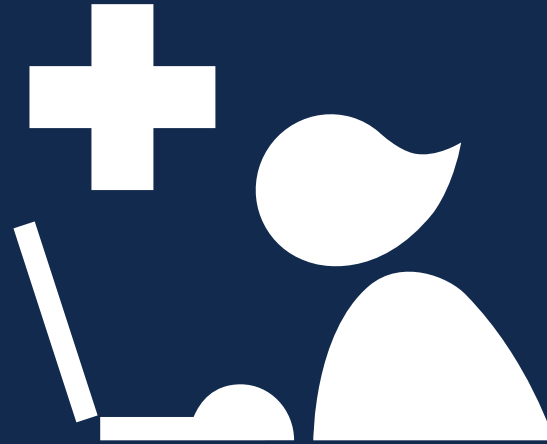




**MARYLAND**  
**Health Care**  
**Commission**



# Telehealth Study

*A Progress Update*

MARCH 17, 2022



# Background

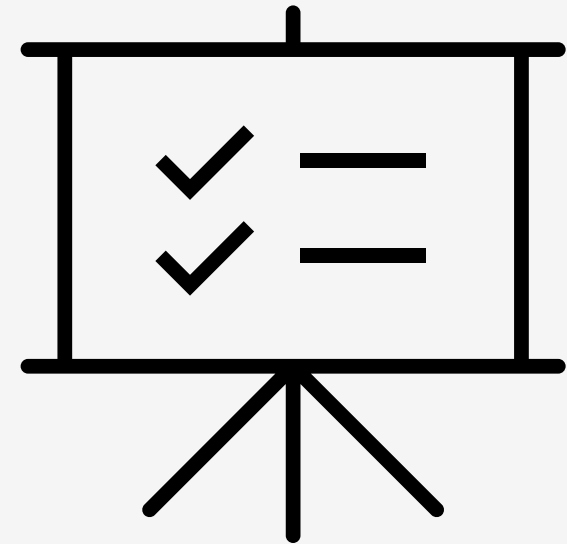
- ▶ Chapter 70 (House Bill 123) and Chapter 71 (Senate Bill 3), *Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021*, requires MHCC to report on the impact of providing telehealth services using audio-only and audio-visual technologies\*
- ▶ In June 2021, MHCC issued an Emergency Request for Proposals
  - The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago was competitively selected to complete study activities in September
- ▶ Recommendations on telehealth coverage and payment levels relative to in-person care are due to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations (HGO) Committee by December 1, 2022

\* See Appendix for more information, including details about the study components in law



# Key Study Objectives

- ▶ Conduct quantitative and qualitative research and analyses of telehealth with a focus on use of audio-only and audio-visual technologies for somatic and behavioral health interventions
- ▶ Develop a Technical Report and Final Recommendations Report





# Study Activities at a Glance

- ▶ **Literature Review** - Identify and compile peer-reviewed and gray literature to examine existing evidence on the effectiveness of telehealth, and new and emerging trends and policies
  - Findings will inform development of six briefing papers focused on telehealth utilization patterns, optimal integration of telehealth into care models, and the impact of telehealth on disparities in access, care quality, and patient safety
- ▶ **Claims Analysis** - Explore telehealth trends from 2018 through 2020 using Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial health care claims data from Maryland's All-Payer Claims Database (APCD)
  - A comparison of cost and service utilization for telehealth and in-person visits and uptake of telehealth before and after the public health emergency by patient characteristics (e.g., age, race and ethnicity, geography, and area-level broadband access)

*\* Regions include Baltimore City, Eastern Shore, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, South-Central and Western Maryland*



# Study Activities at a Glance *(Continued...)*

- ▶ **Provider Survey** – Inquire about use of telehealth for the delivery of care in both rural and urban areas of the State, including technologies used (audio-only and audio-visual)
  - Includes primary care and specialty physicians, nurse practitioners, and behavioral health providers (psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and other licensed professional counselors)
- ▶ **Consumer Engagement** – Conduct telephone interviews with telehealth users and non-users across Maryland\*
  - An assessment of patient experiences and perceptions regarding access to and use of audio-only and audio-visual technologies
- ▶ **Behavioral Health Focus Groups** – Convene two focus groups consisting of 8-10 participants each (including providers and consumers) to gain additional insights about the delivery of mental health and substance use disorder services using telehealth

*\* Consumer selection will ensure regional-level representation across key demographic characteristics, including age, sex, race and ethnicity, income, education level, insurance coverage, and language spoken (English and Spanish)*

# Progress Update





# Literature Review



- ▶ Developed a research framework to structure key concepts that need to be studied
- ▶ Completed an environmental scan of peer-reviewed and gray literature
- ▶ Began summarizing the main points identified in literature and developing outlines for six different briefing papers

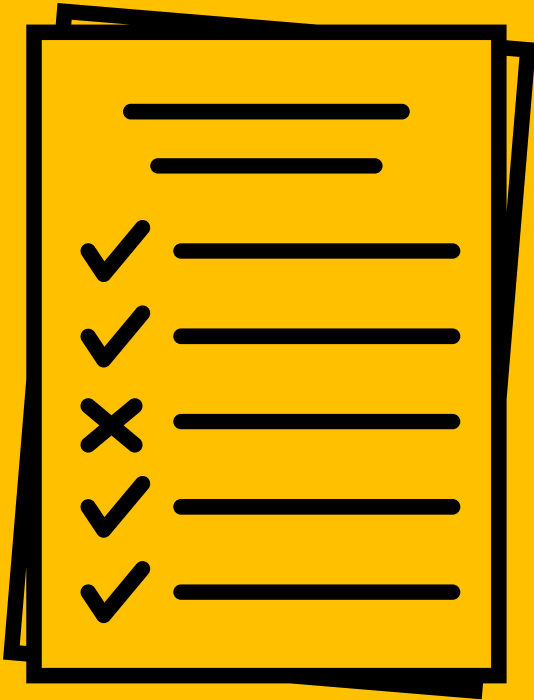


# Data Analysis

- ▶ Finalized APCD data use agreements and completed NORC user credentialing
- ▶ Developed an analytical plan for conducting statistical analyses of Medicaid and commercial claims data, and an abbreviated analysis of Medicare claims to serve as baseline data for Medicaid and commercial results
  - Analyses will look at demographic information, utilization, and cost and reimbursement



# Provider Survey



- ▶ Developed a telehealth survey and pilot tested the questions with select primary care, specialty, and behavioral health providers
- ▶ Engaged various provider organizations to help promote awareness of the survey
- ▶ Opened the survey to providers\*
  - Includes primary care providers (general practice, internal medicine, pediatrics), specialty providers engaged in primary care, nurse practitioners, and behavioral health providers (psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and licensed professional counselors)

*\* See Appendix for a snapshot of completed surveys to date*



# Consumer Engagement

- ▶ Developed a screening questionnaire and began recruiting telehealth users and non-users in four regions of the State\*
  - Consumers interviewed will be representative of each region across key demographic characteristics including age, sex, race and ethnicity, income, education level, insurance status, and language spoken
- ▶ Interviews of consumers' experiences and perceptions of telehealth are underway\*\*

\* *Regions include Baltimore City, Eastern Shore, Montgomery County and Prince George's County, and Western Maryland*

\*\* *See Appendix for a snapshot of completed interviews to date*



# Behavioral Health Focus Groups



- ▶ Completed a Contract Modification for two behavioral health focus groups consisting of 8-10 participants
  - Responsive to recent stakeholder requests for MHCC to consider additional ways to collect qualitative data on use of audio-only and audio-visual technologies for the delivery of mental health and substance use disorder services

# On the Horizon





# Study Activities Roadmap

- ▶ Complete six briefing papers
- ▶ Perform claims analyses on the APCD 2018-2020
- ▶ Conclude administration of the telehealth survey
- ▶ Complete consumer interviews with telehealth users and non-users
- ▶ Conduct three interviews with behavioral health representatives to inform the design and development of questions for the behavioral health focus groups
- ▶ Prepare a preliminary outline of the Technical and Final Recommendations Report
- ▶ Present study findings and draft recommendations to the Commission in November for consideration



# Reoccurring Stakeholder Communications

- ▶ A dedicated MHCC web page featuring information about the study, which is periodically updated:

[mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/Pages/hit/hit\\_telemedicine/hit\\_telemedicine\\_legislative\\_update.aspx](https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/Pages/hit/hit_telemedicine/hit_telemedicine_legislative_update.aspx)

- ▶ Over 100 stakeholders were notified about the web page
  - About 30 stakeholders have subscribed to receive updates on study progress; includes providers, legislative advocates, and representatives from payers, hospitals, long-term care and consumer organizations

# Legislative Study Request Letter: Expansion of Interstate Telehealth



- ▶ Study ways that interstate telehealth can be expanded to allow State residents to use telehealth to receive health services from out-of-state practitioners
  - How to address the insurance implications, including malpractice insurance
  - The use of interstate health compacts
  - How to alter licensure requirements and the impact an expansion would have on Maryland-based health practitioners
  - Any other areas MHCC considers relevant
  
- ▶ On or before December 1, 2023, the MHCC shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee



# The End





# Appendix



# Telehealth Study - Drivers

- ▶ Uncertainty whether the expansion of telehealth coverage and reimbursement policies would expire at the conclusion of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE)
  - Audio-only provided access to mental health services (evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment) for patients who could not use real-time video technology due to a variety of factors (e.g., technical capacity, comfort-level w/ modality, etc.)
- ▶ The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services continues to reimburse codes that were added to the telehealth services list on a temporary basis due to the PHE through the end of CY 2023
- ▶ Private payers bound by new Maryland law continue their PHE telehealth policies; self-insured plans appear to be following suit



# Study Components in Law

- ▶ Analyze the impact of telehealth on disparities in access; take-up rates among different communities and patient populations; and the comparative effectiveness and efficiency of telehealth and in-person visits on the total costs of care and patient outcomes of care
- ▶ Study alignment of telehealth with new models of care that addresses opportunities to improve patient-centered care; services for which telehealth can substitute for in-person care while maintaining the standard of care; and the impact of alternative care delivery models on telehealth utilization, coverage, and reimbursement
- ▶ Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of telehealth and in-person visits, including the impact of different communication technologies on patient health; a survey of health care providers; and resources required to sustainably provide telehealth services for the continuum of health care providers

# Study Components

*(Continued...)*



- ▶ Assess patient awareness and satisfaction with telehealth; privacy risks, benefits of telehealth services; and barriers to care and levels of patient engagement addressed by audio-only and audio-visual telehealth
- ▶ Conduct a review of the appropriateness of telehealth across the continuum of care; inclusion of clinic hospital facility fees in reimbursement for hospital provided telehealth; and the use of telehealth to satisfy network access standards



# Provider Surveys

Region	Total*
Baltimore City	10
Eastern Shore	4
Montgomery and Prince George's	16
South-Central Maryland	19
Western Maryland	1
<b>Total</b> <i>(as of March 7, 2022 – week one)</i>	<b>50</b>



# Consumer Interviews

Region	Total
Eastern Shore	11
Western Maryland	16
Montgomery County and Prince George's County	13
Baltimore City	10
<b>Total</b> <i>(as of March 7, 2022 – week three)</i>	<b>50</b>