

SOUTH CAROLINA Telehealth ALLIANCE

SCTA Advisory Council Meeting

Thursday, May 18th, 2023, 1:00PM – 2:00PM

Meeting Attendees:

Jimmy McElligott, Ragan Richardson, Sonya Ebeling, Sam D’Orio (SCTA), Peter Gardella, Emily Warr, Allie Dodd (MUSC), Kate Miccichi (McLeod), Kathy Schwarting (PCC), Lisa Kopera, Carley Howard Draddy, Robin Gadd-lane, Christian Steen (Prisma), Meera Narasimhan (USC), Margaret Meriwether (SC DMH), Ryan Burnaugh (KMSO), Rick Foster, (Members-at-Large)

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Wins

- a. Palmetto Care Connection’s 2023 Telehealth Summit of South Carolina will be held **December 5-6th, 2023 in Greenville, SC**. Save the dates and sponsor packets will go out in the coming weeks!
- b. SCETV partners with the SCTA to promote telehealth programs across SC. The SCTA is always looking for new telehealth content - please reach out to Ragan Richardson (ragan@sctelehealth.org) if your organization would like to highlight one of its programs in a telehealth video. View all SCETV telehealth videos on their “[Telehealth Stories](#)” webpage!

2. SCTA Procedural and Operational Items

- a. **SCTA 2022 Annual Report**
 - A **huge** thank you to all SCTA partners and stakeholders for the continued support in advancing telehealth in SC. 2022 was another year of telehealth achievements, as seen throughout the 2022 SCTA Annual Report which is available to view on the [SCTA website!](#)
 - Hard copy prints of the report have been ordered and are available to be shipped to local organizations if you wish.
 - Please email Ragan Richardson (ragan@sctelehealth.org) to inquire.
 - Highlights from the 2022 report:
 - **1,200,000+** Overall SC telehealth interactions
 - **640+** SCTA-supported telehealth sites
 - **780,000+** Synchronous telehealth interactions
 - **96,000+** Asynchronous telehealth interactions
 - **240,500+** Remote patient monitoring interactions
 - **750,000+** Synchronous ambulatory visits
 - **63,000+** Average synchronous ambulatory visits per month
 - **69** SCTA telehealth supported hospitals across **36** SC counties
 - **65,000+** Virtual Urgent Care visits
 - **182** SC schools across **29** counties participating in school-based telehealth

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b. GetConnectedSC Broadband Survey

- The SCTA and PCC have been charged by the SC Broadband Office to distribute the “*GetConnected Better Internet Survey*” to assess internet access in SC. This survey will help guide major investments being planned across the state to ensure access to quality internet statewide. This initiative is particularly important to help increase access to telehealth capabilities.
- The survey submissions deadline of **May 31st, 2023** is nearing, and we are asking for assistance with distribution and participation. Ragan Richardson will send sample language to Advisory Council members for organizational distribution, as well as a flyer containing QR codes to the English and Spanish versions of the survey via email.
 - **English Survey Link:** <https://cx.ravencsi.com/NB80m>
 - **Spanish Survey Link:** <https://cx.ravencsi.com/an8QG>

c. Coming Soon, SCTA Data Collection Software – “WIM”

- SCTA clinical partners are asked to report telehealth utilization twice a year (mid-year and end-of-year), to help inform on the progress of SC telehealth using state funds. Currently, this process is completed via Excel for each organization and is a tedious process for SCTA staff to compile.
- SCTA leadership has been working alongside SCTA partners to improve the utilization gathering process to ensure alignment across organizations, and enhance data metrics and mapping.
- We are excited to share that the SCTA is partnering with a local data collection software company (WIM) to build a web-based SCTA utilization dashboard!
 - This software will allow SCTA partners to access their organization’s personalized password-protected telehealth utilization dashboard
 - where SCTA partners can access and update their organization’s telehealth data and sites via password protection.
 - We hope to implement this new software this year, walking SCTA partners through each step of the transition process.

d. New SCTA Stakeholder Workgroup – 5/22/23

- The SCTA was excited to kick off its new quarterly “SCTA Stakeholder Workgroup” on May 22, 2023.
- Facilitated by Palmetto Care Connections and the Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, this workgroup will discuss the needs, barriers, successes, etc. surrounding telehealth among our SC primary care and rural providers and determine ways that our expert supporters can assist (education, broadband, technology, policy, etc.).
- A main priority for this workgroup this summer is to assess the impact of the non-parity reimbursement landscape in SC, via a statewide provider survey. The results of this survey will help inform legislative efforts for the coming year.
- Like other SCTA workgroups, the SCTA Stakeholder Workgroup will keep Advisory Council members updated on its progress and findings.

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3. SCTA Statewide Strategic Plan

a. CY23Q1 Report Highlights

- SCTA partners shared highlights that align with the SCTA Statewide Strategic Plan
- from their SCTA CY23Q1 (January – March 2023) Report.
- The report will soon be made available on the [SCTA Report](#) webpage.

4. Legislative and Advocacy Efforts

a. Session Recap & Next Steps

- **South Carolina Telehealth and Telemedicine Modernization Act (H. 4159):**
 - In partnership with the SC Medical Association and SC Hospital Association, [House Bill 4159: Telehealth and Telemedicine Modernization Act](#) was introduced on March 15, 2023, and passed unanimously through the SC House of Representatives on May 5th, 2023. On May 9th, 2023, the bill was passed to the SC Senate where it was assigned to the Medical Affairs Committee and will be addressed during the next legislative session. Goals of the bill include:
 - **Introduce a new definition of “telehealth”.**
 - **Modernize telehealth prescribing language.**
 - While this bill did not include telehealth payment parity, the SCTA will continue to work with the appropriate stakeholders to ensure sustainability, and focus its summer efforts to understand the impact of the non-parity reimbursement landscape in SC for patients and providers.

b. Payer Engagement

- The SC Payer Scorecard has been updated to reflect telehealth coverage through 12/31/2024. The scorecard is available on the [SCTA Billing & Reimbursement webpage](#).
- SCTA Advisory Council members were provided a document with previous payer priorities and were asked to review and suggest additional priorities for focus during the next legislative session. These priorities will help inform conversations with payers around telehealth coverage and payment in SC.
- Emerging payer priorities that have been brought to SCTA leadership attention are listed below, and council members will be provided a document with detailed information for each priority.
 - Remote supervision of trainees
 - Out-of-state collaborating physician
 - DEA prescribing restrictions
 - Hospital-based therapists & billing
 - Group therapy billing

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c. Federal Updates

- **End of federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:**
 - The federal PHE expired at the end of the day on May 11, 2023. Throughout the pandemic, Congress worked to extend or make permanent many of the COVID-era telehealth flexibilities available for Medicare beneficiaries. Most recently, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 extended the majority of Medicare telehealth flexibilities through December 31, 2024.
 - For more information on the flexibilities that will remain in perpetuity and those that are set to expire next year, access the HHS summary [here](#).

- **CMS issues clarification on outpatient hospital billing and remote supervision:**
 - In response to concerns raised by the community, CMS extended its COVID-19 waivers and flexibilities regarding outpatient hospital billing for remote services provided to patients in their homes. Through December 31, 2023, CMS will allow hospitals to receive payment for telehealth services provided by hospital-employed physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, clinical staff providing Diabetes Self-Management Training or Medical Nutrition Therapy services whose services are billed on the institutional claim form (UB-04).
 - CMS will also continue to allow virtual supervision of residents by teaching physicians in metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) through the end of calendar year 2023. For non-MSAs, virtual supervision of residents will be allowed permanently.
 - For more information: [CMS FAQ document](#).

- **DEA issues “Temporary Extension of COVID-19 Telemedicine Flexibilities for Prescription of Controlled Medications”:**
 - On May 9, the DEA issued a temporary rule that extends the *full set of flexibilities for tele-prescribing of controlled substances put in place during the COVID-19 PHE through November 11, 2023*. The temporary rule was issued jointly with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in response to nearly 39,000 comments submitted to the DEA in March. The DEA has stated that final regulations for prescribing via telehealth will be made, but this temporary stay will be in place as that is being worked upon.
 - The full temporary rule can be accessed [here](#).
 - Importantly, the DEA’s extension does not impact the current rules in South Carolina around remote prescribing of controlled substances, which states that a licensee who establishes a physician-patient relationship solely via telemedicine may not prescribe schedule II or III medications except those medications specifically authorized by the Board of Medicine (see [Section 40-47-37\(C\)\(6\)](#) in the South Carolina Code of Laws).

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▪ **CONNECT for Health Act to be reintroduced in Congress:**

- Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) is expected to introduce an updated version of the CONNECT for Health Act in coming weeks. The new bill is expected to permanently repeal geographic and originating site restrictions and the 6 month in-person requirements for telemental health visits, but stops short of extending audio-only coverage in perpetuity.
- This legislation impacts the Medicare program.

5. Next SCTA Advisory Council Meeting:

- a. **Thursday, August 17th, 2023 from 1:00PM – 2:30PM**
 - a. In-person – MUSC’s Center for Telehealth, Charleston, SC