


## ISSUE MEMORANDUM

<b>DATE</b>	October 24, 2016
<b>TO</b>	Board of Psychology
<b>FROM</b>	 Cherise Burns Central Services Manager
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Agenda Item #9(h)(2) – Report on Discussion of Lack of Third Party Payer Reimbursement for Telehealth Services – Access to Mental Healthcare Campaign

### Background:

As a part of the Outreach and Education Committee's Access to Mental Healthcare Campaign, the Committee invited representatives from the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) to participate in a discussion on telehealth reimbursement policies for psychological services within the Medi-Cal and managed health plans they regulate in California. The representatives from DHCS were Tyrone L. Adams M.D., Medical Consultant and subject matter expert, and Ms. Raquel Sanchez, Research Analyst. The representative from DMHC was Ms. Elizabeth Spring, Attorney IV, of the Office of Plan Licensing.

Dr. Adams and Ms. Sanchez spoke to the committee regarding the requirements for psychologists to successfully be reimbursed for the provision of telehealth services to patients with Medi-Cal and how live-interactive video and audio technology that is Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act compliant must be used in order for telehealth services to be reimbursed by DHCS. Dr. Adams also clarified that in order for telehealth services to be reimbursed the patient must receive those services in a location where a licensed healthcare provider is present and can document that services were provided in the patient's medical record.

A discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of providing DHCS reimbursable telehealth services to patients of psychological services. Dr. Horn questioned the practicality of reimbursable telehealth services in emergency situations when real-time interactive audio, video, or data communication is unavailable, and why Medi-Cal does not reimburse for telephone calls, and electronic mail messages. Discussion continued regarding the differentiation between phone consultations with patients of mental health services and patients of physical medical conditions.

Ms. Elizabeth Spring spoke to the committee and explained that the purpose of her department is to ensure that coverage being offered by an HMO or other service plans are consistent with federal law as stated in the Knox-Keen Act. She advised there is no mandate for health plans to offer telehealth services. She advised that she is aware Magellan, Blue Cross and Health Net do offer telehealth reimbursement. She stated that 23 other states do have laws that require full parity for telehealth services to be reimbursed equal to in-person services. She advised at their last quarterly meeting Blue Cross advised they use Live Health Online, and Health Net uses MD Live for their telehealth needs. She also advised that Kaiser Permanente is starting to use telehealth and is using interactive video.

The committee thanked the speakers for their participation and decided that an article should be written for the *Fall Journal* detailing the information presented to the Committee and DHCS and DMHC agreed to review the article after it is completed.

**Action Requested:**

This item is for information purposes only. No action is required.