

Senator XXXX:

As your constituent, I am *urgently* requesting that telehealth services be covered during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Because the [state of Michigan](#) and [private insurers](#) are allowing telehealth provisions for many other professions, including physicians, physical therapists, and other behavioral health providers, it is *imperative* that this expansion includes speech-language pathology services as well.

On March 10, 2020, Governor Whitmer's office declared a state of emergency across the state. On March 24, 2020, the State of Michigan released executive order 2020-21, also known as the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order. In this order, "all Michigan businesses and operations must temporarily suspend in-person operations that are not necessary to sustain or protect life, and all Michiganders must stay in their homes unless they're a part of that critical infrastructure workforce, engaged in an outdoor activity, or performing tasks necessary to the health and safety of themselves or their family." While [SLPs have been deemed "essential caregivers" by the Department of Homeland Security](#), our places of business have been closed by state order in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This leaves SLPs unable to serve our clients in traditional face-to-face therapy sessions.

An option available to provide important services while preventing the spread of COVID-19 is telehealth services. Telehealth (also known as telepractice or telemedicine) involves the use of real-time audio and/or video communication between therapists and clients. Telehealth has been well-researched and has shown to be an effective delivery method for providing essential speech-language pathology services. Additionally, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and need for social distancing, many states have issued executive orders allowing for the coverage and reimbursement of telehealth services, including: [Illinois](#), [New Jersey](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and the [District of Columbia](#).

SLPs Scope of Practice:

An SLPs professional scope of practice, as outlined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), already includes telehealth as an appropriate and effective method for delivery of speech-language pathology services: [SLP Scope of Practice](#).

Additionally, ASHA provides information regarding considerations and best practices surrounding telehealth services, including a [Practice Portal](#) and an [evidence map](#).

MDHHS currently reimburses speech-language pathology services delivered via telehealth in schools. [See section 2.4 Speech, Language, and Hearing Therapy](#).

State Laws and Licensure:

From a state licensing perspective, [telehealth is allowed for SLPs](#).

Given the current COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that SLPs be reimbursed for telehealth services so that we may continue to provide essential services to our clients and consumers. As shown above, telehealth has been well-documented method for providing treatment, and is already permitted under current state licensure laws. Additionally, telehealth

is currently provided and reimbursed for students in a school setting. This needs to be expanded to outpatient settings. By allowing telehealth services, SLPs will be able to continue providing necessary services to our clients, while at the same time respecting executive orders to maintain social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Thank you in advance for considering the expansion of telehealth services within the state of Michigan to ensure consumers are receiving adequate care during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR MAILING ADDRESS
YOUR CITY, MI YOUR ZIP CODE
YOUR EMAIL