

September 13, 2021

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Attention: CMS-1751-P
Mail Stop C4-26-05
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

Re: Audio-only Modifier Code

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure,

The undersigned organizations appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) CY 2022 Physician Fee Schedule (PFS). While the proposed PFS has numerous provisions, this comment letter focuses solely on the proposed audio-only modifier.

We applaud CMS' quick actions to date to ensure that individuals have access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially by easing the restrictions on telehealth. Indeed, the availability of telehealth, including audio-only services, has been crucial in furnishing health care services during the pandemic.

We know there has been an uptick in the use of audio-only services during the pandemic. For many, including Medicare beneficiaries, audio-only is the sole format to receive services during the COVID-19 pandemic due to barriers in accessing audio-video services. Barriers include lack of access to smart phones and the adequate broadband connection or cellular data to support audio-video services. Additionally, some individuals simply feel more comfortable using the audio-only modality. Given the increase in utilization and reliance on audio-only services, a modifier is necessary so providers can appropriately code and bill for their services. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the health care delivery system and we encourage the evaluation of new modalities so individuals continue to receive quality care. As such, we urge CMS to finalize the proposed audio-only modifier.

We appreciate CMS' leadership during these trying times and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Community Health Plans
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Medical Group Association (AMGA)
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Health Information Management Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Better Medicare Alliance
Centerstone
CEO Action for Racial Equity
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME)
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNC)
Gateway Health Plan
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Health Innovation Alliance
Healthcare Leadership Council
InfoMC, Inc.
International OCD Foundation
Lakeshore Foundation
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health and Autism Insurance Project
NACBHDD and NARMH
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
OCHIN
Ohio Behavioral Health Provider Network
SSM Health
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Jewish Federation of North America
UMPC Western Behavioral Health