

Information and guidance related to COVID-19 is changing rapidly. Please refer to the Physicians Insurance website for the most up-to-date information.

Guidance – Expedited Licensure and Telemedicine Options in Alaska During COVID-19

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Licensure Guidance

1. Expedited State Licensing for Physicians, Osteopaths, Physician Assistants, and Mobile Intensive Care Paramedics.

Alaska has made available expedited licensing processes for out-of-state physicians and other health care providers pursuant to AS 08.64.270 and 12 AAC 40.045 for the COVID-19 response.

The Alaska State Medical Board uses online applications. The application for physicians and osteopaths can be found at the link below:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/med4735.pdf>

A separate application is available for Physician Assistants:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/med4736.pdf>

A separate application is available for Mobile Intensive Care Paramedics:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/med4737.pdf>

More information can be obtained at:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/professionallicensing/statemedicalboard.aspx>

An emergency courtesy license is valid until the date the Governor has declared the COVID-19 emergency no longer exists. 12 AAC 40.045(e)(2)(B).

Applicants must hold a current unencumbered license to practice as a physician, osteopath, physician assistant, or mobile intensive care paramedic. Applicants need to submit a completed application on the form provided by the State along with verification of a current license to practice that is in good standing and not under investigation in the jurisdiction that issued the license. The applicant must receive clearance from the National Practitioner Data Bank. Physicians, osteopaths, and physician assistants must also receive clearance from the Federation of State Medical Boards and from the federal Drug Enforcement Administration. Mobile intensive care paramedics must submit a declaration of sponsorship form signed by a physician or osteopath who is licensed in the State of Alaska or who holds an emergency

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courtesy license stating that they will provide supervision of the mobile intensive care paramedic as required by Alaska law.

2. Expedited State Licensing for Nurses.

The Alaska Board of Nursing has created an emergency courtesy license that allows a Registered Nurse who has an unencumbered license in another state to apply for an emergency license in Alaska. The online application can be found at the link below filed through a myAlaska account:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/cbp/professionallicense/New>

Or the applicant can file a paper application:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/NUR4732.pdf>

3. General Licensing Information.

General information about licensing can be obtained at:

<https://my.alaska.gov>

4. Exception for Out-of-State Licensed Providers for Telemedicine and Telehealth for COVID-19.

Physicians, osteopaths, podiatrists, advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses and practical nurses may provide telemedicine and telehealth services without first obtaining an Alaska license if certain conditions are met: (1) the health care provider must be licensed, permitted, or certified to provide health care services in another jurisdiction and be in good standing in the other jurisdiction; (2) the health care services provided without an in-person physical examination are within the practitioner's authorized scope of practice in the other jurisdiction; (3) the health care services provided are limited to services related to screening for, diagnosing, or treating COVID-19, unless the health care provider has a preexisting provider-patient relationship that is unrelated to COVID-19; and (4) in the event that the health care provider determines that the encounter will extend beyond screening for, diagnosing, or treating COVID-19, the health care provider advises the patient that the health care provider is not authorized to provide the services to the patient, recommends that the patient contact a health care provider licensed in the state of Alaska, and terminates the encounter.

The amount charged by a health care provider under this exception must be reasonable and consistent with the ordinary fees typically charged for that service. If the health care provider is

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required to terminate the encounter under subsection (4) in the immediate above paragraph, the health care provider may not charge for any services provided during the encounter.

Telemedicine Guidance

1. Telemedicine vs. Telehealth.¹

Telemedicine: Telemedicine refers to the practice of caring for a patient when the patient and provider are not physically together. It allows health care providers to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients using technology such as video conferencing and smartphones without the need for an in-person visit. It is a term most often used in the context of providing remote clinical services.

Telehealth: Telehealth is a broader term that includes telemedicine, but can also refer to non-clinical services like using technology for preventative, educational, and health-related administrative activities.

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association offers a free online *Quick Start Guide to Telehealth Toolkit*: <https://www.ashnha.com/covid-19-telehealth/>

2. Required Licensing Documents.

Businesses offering telemedicine must hold a valid Alaska Business License and must be listed on the Telemedicine Business Registry. Anyone providing telehealth must hold an Alaska License to perform the services they are offering.

3. Standard of Practice for Telemedicine.

The standard of practice for telemedicine in Alaska remains the same with the State adopting the principles for telemedicine practice found in the American Medical Association (AMA), *Report 7 of the Council on Medical Services (A-14), Coverage of and Payment for Telemedicine*, dated 2014, and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), *Model Policy for the Appropriate Use of Telemedicine Technologies in the Practice of Medicine*, dated 2014, when providing treatment rendering a diagnosis, prescribing, dispensing, or administering a prescription, or controlled substance without first conducting an in-person physical examination. 12 AAC 40.943(a).

During the COVID-19 health emergency, an appropriate licensed health care provider need not be present with the patient to assist a physician or physician assistant with examination, diagnosis, and treatment if the physician or physician assistant is prescribing, dispensing, or

¹ <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/telehealth/default.aspx>

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administering buprenorphine to initiate treatment for opioid use disorder and the physician or physician assistant (1) is a Drug Addiction Treatment Act (DATA) waived practitioner; (2) documents all attempts to conduct a physical examination under AS 08.64.364(b) and the reason why the examination cannot be performed; and requires urine toxicology screening as part of the patient's medication adherence plan. 12 AAC 40.943(b).

4. Telemedicine and Alaska Medicaid.

Effective March 20, 2020 and continuing for as long as the United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's public health emergency remains in effect, Alaska Medicaid is expanding its Medicaid telehealth coverage. Training is being offered by the State's Fiscal Intermediary, Conduent.

A listing of the Temporary Expansion of Medicaid Telemedicine Coverage can be found at the link below:

http://manuals.medicaidalaska.com/docs/dnld/Update_Temp_Expansion_of_Medicaid_Telemed_Coverage_Revised.pdf

A listing of dates and times for training can be found at the link below:

http://manuals.medicaidalaska.com/docs/dnld/Update_Telehealth_Temporary_Expansion_Training.pdf

5. Health Insurance Coverage for Telehealth Services.

Effective March 17, 2020, AS 21.42.422 was revised to expand telehealth coverage to all covered services of health care insurance plans in the individual and group markets subject to Alaska Insurance law. Services must be provided by a health care provider licensed in Alaska. Health plans cannot require an in-person visit with the health care provider prior to allowing for the telehealth services to be provided. The State expects health plans to review their insurance contracts and make the necessary form filings by May 17, 2020.

If a health plan provides for services through a network, the health plan must also offer a non-network option to covered persons. AS 21.07.030. This requirement is applicable to telehealth. Covered persons must be able to access telehealth services from both network and non-network providers.