

Government Reimbursement Policies in California

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Government reimbursement policies for healthcare providers within California can be explored from two angles: Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare is a government reimbursement program for healthcare services specifically designed for elderly persons – who are over 65 years. California's government reimbursement policies for Medicare are not very progressive with the policies mirroring those of other states across the United States. The policies reimburse healthcare providers at an originating site serving patients at a distant site. Approved originating sites encompass physicians' offices, hospitals, rural health clinics, etc. In California, Medicare primarily cater for live telemedicine where the patient and physician are interacting over video chat.

From a Medicaid perspective, California is significantly progressive compared to other states. In 2011, California passed the Telehealth Advancement Act which widened the scope of healthcare services eligible for reimbursement. A notable improvement in the scope of coverage for Telehealth Advancement Act include compensating healthcare providers for providing remote services to patients at home rather than the conventional originating sites, such as physicians' offices, hospitals, and rural health clinics. Another key improvement in the 2011 Telehealth Advancement Act is widening the scope to allow government reimbursement for email and telephone-delivered services.

The government reimbursement policies for healthcare providers have had a positive impact on the use of telemedicine in California. The enactment of the 2011 Telehealth Advancement Act widened the scope for the healthcare services that could be reimbursed to include remote healthcare services offered by healthcare practitioners to patients at their homes. Another notable improvement in the 2011 Telehealth Advancement Act is reimbursement for store and forward services ("MEDI-CAL | CCHP Website", 2019). Store

and forward services entail the professional interactions made between primary care providers and medical specialists. Thus, widening the scope of coverage thanks to 2011 Telehealth Advancement Act has had a positive impact of the use of telemedicine in California.

References

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