

WASHINGTON:

Medication Abortion Care & Telehealth At A Glance

Updated: August 2023

ABORTION CARE IN WASHINGTON

- ▶ *Pregnant people in Washington have limited access to abortion care.* 59% of Washington counties lack an in-person abortion clinic.¹
- ▶ *Abortion is an essential, time sensitive health care service.* Medically unnecessary restrictions push medication abortion care, which is a non-invasive abortion option that is approved by the FDA for use up to 10 weeks in pregnancy, out of reach for many.
- ▶ *Being denied care negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of pregnant people and their families.* Women who were denied a wanted abortion had four times greater odds of living below the Federal Poverty Level and were more likely to experience poorer health outcomes for years after the pregnancy.²
- ▶ *People seeking abortion already face significant barriers to receiving quality care.* Restrictions on abortion care and insurance coverage disproportionately impact people working to make ends meet, immigrants, young people, and people of color.³
- ▶ *Washingtonians support access to abortion care.* Nearly 8 in 10 [77%] of Washington voters say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.⁴

TELEHEALTH: A TOOL FOR EXPANDING ACCESS TO MEDICATION ABORTION CARE IN WASHINGTON

- ▶ *Telehealth is a tool that can expand abortion access.* Research shows that telehealth reduces barriers to care and can help patients access care earlier in pregnancy.⁵
- ▶ Overall, telehealth for medication abortion care policy in Washington is expansive - services are covered at the same rate regardless of their delivery in-person or via telehealth.^{6,7}
 - Washington requires private insurers to reimburse for interactive video and audio-only visits at parity with in-person care, permits a broad range of telehealth modalities, does not restrict originating sites for telehealth encounters (i.e., patients can receive care via telehealth from their homes), and allows a broad range health care professionals to provide telehealth for medication abortion care.⁸
 - In March 2023, Washington State Department of Health launched a new webpage and tool to help residents find telehealth sexual and reproductive health care services in the state, including abortion care.⁹

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE, VISIT:

- ▶ [Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care](#)
- ▶ [Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Process Chart](#)
- ▶ [Equity in Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Checklist](#)

POLICY IMPACTING PROVISION OF TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE

- ▶ There are no notable barriers that limit the ability of individuals to receive medication abortion care generally or via telehealth in the state of Washington.
- ▶ Washington's Medicaid program covers abortions broadly, providing abortion coverage without regard to factors such as the cause of the abortion. Additionally, Washington state law requires coverage of abortion care under most insurance plans.¹⁰

POLICY IMPACTING COVERAGE OF TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE IN WASHINGTON

- ▶ **Out of State Provider Eligibility:** It is unclear whether providers who are licensed in Washington, but physically located outside the state may provide telehealth to patients located within Washington at the time of care.
 - **Impact:** This may limit the number of providers available to provide care to Washington patients.
- ▶ **Coverage for translation services:** Providers participating in Washington Medicaid are required to provide translation services for Medicaid beneficiaries, including via telehealth.¹¹ There are guidelines on how providers can bill for these services.¹² There is no requirement that private payers cover translation services.

¹ Guttmacher Institute. [State Facts About Abortion: Washington](#). 2022.

² Greene Foster, D. [The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a Thousand Women, and the Consequences of Having—or Being Denied—an Abortion](#). June 2 2020.

³ Boonstra, H. [Abortion in the Lives of Women Struggling Financially: Why Insurance Coverage Matters](#). Guttmacher Policy Review. 2016.

⁴ PRRI. [Abortion Attitudes in a Post-Roe World: Findings From the 50-State 2022 American Values Atlas](#). February 23 2023.

⁵ Aiken, A., et al. [Effectiveness, safety and acceptability of no-test medical abortion provided via telemedicine: 16 a national cohort study](#). *British Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*. February 2021.

⁶ Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) [Physician-Related Services Billing Guide](#). 2021.

⁷ RCW 48.43.735 [Reimbursement of health care services provided through telemedicine or store and forward technology—Audio-only telemedicine](#)

⁸ RCW 48.43.735 [Reimbursement of health care services provided through telemedicine or store and forward technology—Audio-only telemedicine](#)

⁹ Washington State Department of Health. [Telehealth sexual and reproductive health care services now available in Washington](#). March 8 2023.

¹⁰ RCW 48.43.073 [Required abortion coverage](#)

¹¹ Medicaid. [Translation and Interpretation Services](#)

¹² [Interpreter Services Billing Guide](#), 2021.

- **Impact:** Providers may be less likely to offer patients with translation needs access to telehealth services, forcing unnecessary in-person visits and inequitable access to care.
- ▶ **No coverage for mailing medications:** In Washington, there is no requirement for public or private payers to cover the cost of mailing medications.¹³
 - **Impact:** Without this coverage, providers and/or pharmacies may be less likely to offer patients the option of mailing medications, forcing unnecessary in-person visits and inequitable access to care.

MORE INFORMATION ON TELEHEALTH IN WASHINGTON:

- ▶ [Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- ▶ Center for Connected Health Policy - [Washington State Telehealth Laws](#)
- ▶ Washington Department of Health - [Telehealth Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Services](#)

¹³ HCA does not cover the cost of shipping. The pharmacy is responsible for the cost of shipping. Clients must not be billed for shipping or postage costs." [Prescription Drug Program Billing Guide](#), 2022.