

## Health Information Compliance Alert

### Policy: Federal Agencies Collaborate to Thwart Telehealth Discrimination

**New guidance offers tools to deal with telehealth inequity.**

The pandemic revealed systemic health inequities, including access to quality healthcare and innovative technologies. That's one reason why the feds recently issued new guidance that aims to cut discriminatory practices in the telehealth services realm.

On July 29, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in collaboration with the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced new guidance to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The tools aim to protect the rights of people with disabilities and limited English proficiency and ensure their access to telehealth.



"Telehealth has become an evolving and common pathway for accessing healthcare, particularly as our society becomes increasingly digitized," explains Assistant Attorney General **Kristen Clarke** of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division in the release. "It is critical to ensure that telehealth care is accessible to all, including patients with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency, and people of all races and national origins."

The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and DOJ-OCR worked together on the guidance, which explains the obligations providers have regarding telehealth services as well as their patients' rights to these important technologies. "The guidance provides examples of actions that may be discriminatory and describes steps that providers may need to take to ensure that health care offered via telehealth is accessible. The guidance also provides a list of resources that providers and patients may wish to consult for additional information about telehealth and civil rights protections," HHS expounds.

Review the guidance at [www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-on-nondiscrimination-in-telehealth.pdf](https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-on-nondiscrimination-in-telehealth.pdf).