



News for Immediate Release

May 22, 2012

Governor Corbett Improves Access to Quality Health Care through Telemedicine Initiative

Harrisburg – Committed to helping the 2.1 million Pennsylvanians covered by the Medical Assistance program, Governor Tom Corbett today announced that Pennsylvania will increase recipients' access to specialist care by expanding coverage for telemedicine.

By using proven technology, like interactive audio and video equipment, physicians and patients will now be able to connect from remote locations. This practice is commonly referred to as telemedicine and allows for two-way, real-time interactive communication between the patient and the physician.

"By fully embracing telemedicine, we will improve a person's ability to receive care, especially for Pennsylvania's large rural population who can now receive diagnosis and treatment from distant medical centers," said Governor Corbett. "This expansion will help more Pennsylvanians receive the quality health care they need from anywhere in the state."

The use of telemedicine had previously been limited to specific specialist consultations. Now, it has been expanded to include additional specialty physicians who will be able to perform consultations and diagnose patients, recommend and monitor treatment, and even order tests or prescribe medication.

To expand the use of telemedicine, the following changes have been made to the Department of Public Welfare's Medical Assistance program:

- Establish the use of real-time interactive technology, such as audio and video equipment as a method of delivering consultation services;
- Consultations can now occur between all physician specialists like cardiologists, obstetricians or neurologists;
- Remove the requirement that telemedicine consultations can only be performed with participation from the referring physician.

Telemedicine leads to better results for patients because of increased choice and access to quality care. It is one of the fastest-growing trends in health care as many employers, insurance carriers and now, Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance program, are more fully embracing the technology.

“Healthier patients lead to a higher quality of life for the individual and their family,” Corbett said. “When we have the opportunity to embrace an initiative that delivers proven results for those in our care, we welcome the opportunity because the ultimate outcome is a stronger, healthier Pennsylvania.”

“The Department of Public Welfare is pleased for the opportunity to expand options such as telemedicine to our Medical Assistance patients and their medical providers,” said Secretary of Public Welfare Gary D. Alexander. “We look forward to finding additional ways to offer effective and innovative care for those that we serve.”

The Department of Public Welfare, which oversees the Medical Assistance program, will expand telemedicine to all participating Medical Assistance providers on May 23, 2012.

For more information, visit www.pa.gov.

Media contacts:

Kelli Roberts, Governor’s Office, 717-783-1116

Carey Miller, Department of Public Welfare, 717-787-9157

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