

COVID-19 Communicative Technology

In 2020, CMS launched the Communicative Technology initiative in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative granted the states the ability to approve requests for CMP funds for technology that allows residents to engage in virtual social and telehealth visits as restrictions have been placed on visitors in nursing facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This initiative followed guidance from the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for infection control and prevention in nursing facilities in response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Communicative Technology Allowable Use of Funds

- Devices that are able to support virtual social and telehealth visits;
- Adaptive accessories such as headphones, tripods, and protective covers; and
- Cleaning and disinfection products that appear on the EPA's Disinfectant List for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 and are in accordance with recommendations of the device manufacturer.

COVID-19 Communicative Technology Initiative Prohibited Use of Funds

- Travel;
- Internet or software subscription fees;
- Administrative fees; and
- Indirect costs such as staff fringe benefits or facility maintenance.

Parameters for state approval of allowable uses of CMP funds for communicative technology

- Applicants must only include requests for funds to purchase communicative technology devices (e.g. iPads, tablets, webcams) and accessories (e.g. headphones, protective covers). The application should not include requests for items identified as prohibited (travel, administrative costs).
- Devices must support both virtual social and telehealth visits (e.g. the devices must connect to the internet and have appropriate installed software such as FaceTime or GoogleMeet).
- Devices may be shared among residents, with a ratio of one device to 7-10 residents. Facilities will **not** be permitted to purchase personal devices for any resident. Devices should not be shared between COVID-19 positive (or suspected) and other residents (COVID-19 negative or observation status). Devices must be cleaned and disinfected between residents.
- Facilities may request up to \$3,000 for communicative technology, which will then be paid by DMAS. For applications or requests for exceptions that exceed the \$3,000 per facility, these may be considered, such as the case of a facility with a large number of residents; however, these applications must be forwarded to CMS and will be reviewed on a case by case basis which, if approved, will delay payment to facilities.

Communicative Technology Initiative Results

DMAS approved the use of CMP funds to provide residents of **195 facilities** in the Commonwealth with communicative technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CMP funds in the amount of \$489,280 was disbursed to the facilities to purchase communicative technology.