

SUBJECT: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TELEHEALTH SERVICES SECTION: CREDENTIALING/RECREREDENTIALING POLICY NUMBER: CR-40	EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/1/2026
<i>Applies to all products administered by the Plan except when changed by contract</i>	

Policy Statement

The Plan recognizes the occasional need to credential practitioners providing Behavioral Health (BH) telehealth services to Plan members. This policy ensures that all Behavioral Health providers delivering services via telehealth are appropriately credentialed, licensed and competent to provide safe, effective, and compliant care.

Telehealth providers are subject to the same credentialing and recredentialing standards as providers delivering in-person services, with additional telehealth-specific requirements.

This policy establishes standardized processes for credentialing, recredentialing, and ongoing monitoring of Behavioral Health providers who deliver services via telehealth.

Definitions

- **Telehealth:** The delivery of healthcare services via electronic and telecommunications technologies.
- **Credentialing:** The process of verifying a provider’s qualifications, licensure, education, training, and professional history.
- **Originating Site:** The physical location of the patient is physically at the time services are rendered.
- **Distant Site Provider:** The practitioner delivering healthcare services via telehealth.

Scope

This policy applies to all independently practicing Behavioral Health practitioners providing **telehealth-only services via audio-visual modalities** on behalf of the Plan when the practitioner is employed by or contracted with a participating group, or when the distant site is located within the Plan’s service area, including:

- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Licensed Behavioral Analyst (LBA)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW)
- Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHC)
- Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT)
- Licensed Creative Arts Therapists (LCAT)
- Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (NPs)

Credentialing Requirements

- a. Behavioral Health telehealth providers must complete the full credentialing process and receive approval **prior** to rendering services.
- b. Behavioral Health telehealth providers must maintain active, unrestricted licensure in the originating and distant state(s).
- c. Behavioral Health telehealth providers are responsible for notifying the Credentialing Department of any license sanctions, restrictions, expirations, or changes within **ten (10) business days**.
- d. Telehealth-specific competencies must be verified during credentialing and maintained throughout the provider's participation with the Plan.
- e. Credentialing and recredentialing activities are conducted in accordance with applicable federal, state, accreditation, and the Plan credentialing requirements.
- f. Approval of credentials, when granted by the Plan's Credentialing Committee, shall not exceed **thirty-six (36) months**.

Procedure

1. Initial Credentialing

- a. Behavioral Health telehealth providers must submit a completed application in its entirety, for review and should meet all criteria established by the Plan. (Refer to policies CR01 and CR01A Section 1.B-K) The Plan will notify the applicant by telephone or in writing to request the missing information needed for completion.
- b. Prior to the delivery of telehealth services, the applicant must meet credentialing requirements will verify and document the following:
 - Current, complete and accurate CAQH application
 - Current, unrestricted professional license in:
 - The originating sites state where the patient is physically located at the time of service
 - The distant sites state where the provider is providing the services.
 - Any additional states required by payer or regulatory guidance
 - DEA registration, if prescribing controlled substances
 - National Provider Identifier (NPI)
 - Social Security Death Master File (SSDMF)
 - Education, training, and professional qualifications
 - Board certification or eligibility, if applicable
 - Work history with explanations for any gaps
 - Professional references, if required
 - Malpractice claims history
 - Professional liability insurance meeting Plan minimum coverage limits

- State licensure sanctions/actions
- OMIG/OIG/GSA/SAM exclusion screening
- OFAC Sanctions
- Completion of telehealth competency training

2. Telehealth-Specific Credentialing Requirements

The Plan will confirm and document a Behavioral Health telehealth provider's competency in:

- Telehealth platform use and functionality
- Behavioral Health telehealth clinical appropriateness
- Privacy, security, and HIPAA compliance in a virtual setting
- Verification of patient identity and physical location
- Emergency and crisis management during telehealth encounters
- Knowledge of applicable telehealth laws and regulatory requirements

3. Recredentialing

a. Behavioral Health telehealth providers are recredentialed at least every **thirty-six (36) months**.

b. Recredentialing includes verification and documentation of:

- Current, complete and accurate CAQH application
- Current, unrestricted professional licensure in all required jurisdictions
- DEA registration, if applicable
- National Provider Identifier (NPI)
- Board certification or eligibility, when applicable
- Malpractice History
- Professional liability insurance coverage

c. Ongoing monitoring includes:

- License and certification validation
- OMIG/OIG/GSA/SAM exclusion monitoring
- OFAC Sanctions
- State licensure sanctions/actions
- Quality and utilization review
- Review of complaints, incidents, and adverse events

4. Delegated Credentialing (If Applicable)

- Delegated credentialing entities must meet all Plan, regulatory, and accreditation standards.
- Written delegation agreements are maintained.
- Oversight and audit activities are conducted at least annually.
- Identified deficiencies require documented corrective action plans.

5. Emergency and Patient Safety Protocols

Behavioral Health Telehealth providers must:

- Verify and document the patient's physical location at each telehealth encounter
- Maintain access to emergency resources local to the patient's location
- Follow established procedures for crisis intervention, mandatory reporting, and medical emergencies

6. Compliance and Enforcement

- Compliance with this policy is monitored through audits, credentialing reviews, and ongoing oversight.
- Failure to comply may result in corrective action, suspension, or termination of telehealth participation and privileges.

7. Documentation and Record Retention

- Credentialing and recredentialing records are maintained in a secure credentialing system.
- Records are retained in accordance with Plan, state, and federal retention requirements.

The Plan's Credentialing Committee may receive, and review applications submitted as exceptions to this Policy.

***Note:** Except as required by law, the Credentialing Committee reserves the right to grant exceptions to this policy when determined to be in the best interest of the community.*

Cross Reference: CR-01, CR-01A, CR-02, CR-02A

Committee Approvals

Corporate Credentials Committee: 5/20/2026, 6/17/2026

Behavioral Health Provider Telehealth Attestation

I attest that I have reviewed Credentialing Policy CR40, located on the Provider Portal at [Credentialing Policies | Providers | Excellus BlueCross BlueShield](#), and have met all Behavioral Health Telehealth requirements established by the Plan, including:

Telehealth-Specific Competency Requirements

I attest that I am competent in all required telehealth practices, including:

- Telehealth platform use and functionality
- Behavioral Health telehealth clinical appropriateness
- Privacy, security, and HIPAA-compliant virtual care
- Verification of patient identity and physical location
- Emergency and crisis management during telehealth encounters
- Knowledge of applicable telehealth laws and regulatory requirements

Emergency and Patient Safety Requirements

I attest that during each telehealth encounter, I:

- Verify and document the patient's physical location
- Maintain access to emergency resources local to the patient
- Follow all procedures for crisis intervention, mandatory reporting, and medical emergencies

Compliance Requirements

I attest that I comply with all Plan policies related to Behavioral Health telehealth services and understand that:

- Compliance is monitored through audits, credentialing reviews, and ongoing oversight
- Failure to comply may result in corrective action, suspension, or termination of telehealth participation and privileges

Signature

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Return via:

Email: credentialing@excellus.com or

Fax: 315-731-9626