



March 26, 2020

This week, Governor Jay Inslee and Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler took action to give health care providers additional telemedicine tools to use during the COVID-19 pandemic. PTWA lobbied both the Insurance Commissioner's Office and the Governor's office to take this action so that physical therapists can continue to treat patients using a full arsenal of tools, thus keeping patients healthy and out of emergency departments.

On Tuesday, Commissioner Kreidler issued [Emergency Order 20-02](#), which, in part, addresses the barrier of insurers requiring telemedicine platforms that are only used by physicians. The Emergency Order requires insurers to allow in-network providers to use non-HIPAA compliant communication platforms if the provider is not already using a HIPAA-compliant platform or the insurer is not making a HIPAA-compliant platform available to in-network providers. It also deems telephone-only communication as telemedicine.

Last night, Governor Inslee issued [Proclamation 20-29](#), which mandates that an insurer pay an in-network provider the same reimbursement rate for a telemedicine visit as it does for an in-person visit. It also prohibits insurers from denying a telemedicine claim from an in-network provider for a medically necessary covered service even if that provider's current contract does not reimburse for services through telemedicine. This proclamation is effective through April 24th.

The COVID-19 pandemic demands that health care providers and payers reconsider how care is delivered, in order to reduce the risk of further spreading infection. Access to telemedicine has become of paramount importance to ensure the safety of patients and their physical therapy providers. Governor Inslee's and Commissioner Kreidler's actions ensure that access to physical therapy continues during this pandemic.