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Governor Bullock Expands Access to Telemedicine Services to Slow the Spread of COVID-19

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today expanded access to telemedicine services to ensure Montana Medicaid patients receive quality health care in their homes to prevent unnecessary gatherings at health care facilities and slow the spread of COVID-19.

“Expanding telemedicine will provide the physical, mental, and substance use care Montanans need without overwhelming health care facilities responding to COVID-19 or risking unnecessary exposure,” Governor Bullock said. **“I want to thank providers across the state who are not only on the frontlines preparing for and treating patients with COVID-19 but are making sure all patients have safe options to receive quality care.”**

On a call with the Montana Hospital Association, the Montana Medical Association, and the Montana Primary Care Association, Governor Bullock announced several measures that will go into effect on Friday, March 20, including a **policy to allow patients and providers to communicate via telephone** or through secure online communications. The existing policy only allows telemedicine through video chat and leaves out Montanans who might not have access to video chat capabilities through laptops and smartphones.

Governor Bullock also announced he will eliminate language that **prevents Medicaid for paying for telemedicine services if that patient and provider are located in the same community. A requirement that members should establish face-to-face relationships with primary care providers will also be waived.**

Governor Bullock is encouraging private insurance providers to enact the same policies for their customers.

Yesterday Governor Bullock announced a plan to pay for COVID-19 tests and treatment for uninsured Montanans. State funds and potentially federal funds will be used to pay for testing and treatment beginning on March 23. To access this emergency assistance Montanans can call 406-444-7605 or email hhs presumptive@mt.gov.