

HEALTH BENEFITS E-NEWS

**Department of Human Resource Management
Office of Health Benefits**

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Telemedicine Option Next Year for Receiving Health Care Services

Getting medical care or advice quickly is important, and technology has provided one more alternative. New state legislation effective in January 2011 will allow state health plan members to use telemedicine services to seek help for their health-related concerns.

Telemedicine services include the use of interactive audio, video, or other electronic media to provide diagnosis, consultation, or treatment. These services offer:

- Increased access to doctors, especially in medically underserved/rural areas
- Improved quality and continuity of care
- Convenience
- Reduction of time lost from work or travel costs

Here's an example of how telemedicine works. An employee visits their primary care doctor for an illness or condition. The PCP recommends seeing a specialist.

Standard Process: The employee would make an appointment with the specialist and then travel to the provider's office the day of the appointment.

Telemedicine: If the provider's office is outfitted for telemedicine, the employee could receive the diagnosis or treatment from the specialist – while still in the primary care doctor's office. The specialist can hear directly what the employee is experiencing, see any physical symptoms through a computer monitor, and provide the primary care doctor with next step recommendations.

Equipment used for telemedicine must have a high enough level of audio quality and visual clarity to be the same as what a member would experience in a face-to-face office visit with a health care provider.

Note: Telemedicine services do not include an audio-only phone call, e-mail or fax transmission, which are not covered by state health plans.

COVA Connect Members: Don't Miss Out on the Drawing for an iPad!

Some COVA Connect enrollee will be the lucky winner of an iPad when the first COVA Connect Rewards Program drawing is held at the end of October. To be eligible for the drawing, employees need to complete the Personal Health Profile on Optima Health's Web site as soon as possible and no later than October 31.

If you have employees in your agency enrolled in COVA Connect, please encourage them to participate. Additional valuable prizes will be coming! COVA Connect members should visit the Rewards Program section on the Optima Health Web site at

<http://www.optimahealth.com/OptimaHealth/Members/Unsecured/Resources/Pages/COVA-rewards.htm>.

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