



## Payment Policies for Healthcare Services Provided to Injured Workers and Crime Victims

# Temporary Telehealth Independent Medical Exams (IME) Policy

Effective January 1, 2023



**Link:** Look for possible **updates and corrections** to these payment policies at:

[www.Lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Billing/FeeSched/2022/](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Billing/FeeSched/2022/)



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**Note:** For dates of service before January 1, 2023, please refer to the [Temporary Record Review & Telehealth Independent Medical Exams \(IME\) Policy](#).



## Definitions

- ▶ **Originating site:** The place where the worker is located when receiving telehealth services. For the purposes of this temporary policy, the originating site may be the worker's home. Refer to [Chapter 10: Evaluation and Management \(E/M\) Services](#) for additional information about telehealth services rendered to a worker at an origination site other than home.
- ▶ **Telehealth and Telemedicine:** For the purposes of this temporary policy, the terms telehealth and telemedicine are used interchangeably and refer to face-to-face services delivered by a qualified medical provider through a real-time, two-way, audio video connection. These services aren't appropriate without a video connection.



## Payment policy: Temporary Telehealth IME

Labor and Industries (L&I) is temporarily allowing the delivery of independent medical exams (IME) via telehealth. This temporary telehealth policy began as part of the insurer's response to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. A permanent telehealth policy for IMEs is in development for release in 2023.

Effective March 9, 2020, L&I IME providers may use telehealth as a modality to deliver IMEs for workers. This temporary policy is considered supplementary and doesn't replace [Chapter 13: Independent Medical Exams \(IME\)](#), or any other chapters within the Medical Aid Rules and Fee Schedules (MARFS).

This temporary policy expands services to allow certain IMEs via telehealth. This policy will expire June 30, 2023 unless the department determines an extension is appropriate. The department also reserves the right to terminate this policy before June 30, 2023.

Before the exam, the IME provider(s) is responsible for assessing a worker's ability and willingness to participate in an exam via telehealth, as well as ensuring telehealth is the appropriate method of service delivery for safe and effective care.

The claims manager, worker, representative, employer, or any other party to the claim, must also agree a telehealth IME is appropriate. These individuals should also agree to the location of the worker during the IME.

### ► System requirements

Telehealth services require an interactive telecommunication system, consisting of special two-way audio and video equipment that permits real time communication between the worker and provider. Providers are responsible for ensuring complete confidentiality and privacy of the worker is protected at all times.



**Note:** If interpreter services are needed, providers may use interpreters via video or telephone through [CTS LanguageLink](#).

### ► Services that can be billed

The following IMEs may be conducted via telehealth:

- Mental health,

- Dermatology,
- Speech when there is no documented hearing loss,
- Kidney function,
- Hematopoietic system,
- Endocrine.

When scheduling the telehealth visit, the provider is responsible for ensuring telehealth is the appropriate method of service delivery to effectively conduct an IME. Telehealth visits have the same requirements as in-person visits.

### ▶ Billing requirements

For services delivered via telehealth, bill the applicable codes as if delivering care in person.

Bill the appropriate local code using **place of service –02** when the worker isn't in their home. Use **place of service –10** when the worker is in their home.

**Modifier –GT** shouldn't be used.

### ▶ Duration of temporary policy

This temporary policy for telehealth IMEs expires June 30, 2023. If the department deems it necessary to extend or terminate this policy, an update and correction will be posted.

### ▶ Additional documentation requirements

For the purposes of this temporary policy, the following must be included in addition to the documentation and coding requirements for services you are billing, as noted in [Chapter 13: Independent Medical Exams \(IME\)](#) and the other chapters within the Medical Aid Rules and Fee Schedules (MARFS):

- A note about the situation that prompted the encounter to occur via telehealth,
- A notation of the worker's location, *and*
- Documented consent of the claims manager, worker, employer, representative (if applicable), and all other parties.

**▶ What isn't covered**

IMEs that require worker contact or direct hands-on care isn't covered via telehealth.

IMEs other than those noted above aren't covered via telehealth.

The insurer won't provide reimbursement to any party who acquires equipment for telehealth.

The worker won't be reimbursed for using home as an originating site, or for any other telehealth related services.

Telephonic visits don't replace video two-way communication and can't be used to bill services.

Telehealth services must be originated either from a medical origination site or worker's home.



## Links: Related topics

If you're looking for more information about...	Then go here:
<b>Administrative rules</b> for "Who may treat"	Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-20-015: <a href="http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-20-015">http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-20-015</a>
<b>Becoming an L&amp;I provider</b>	L&I's website: <a href="http://www.Lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Becoming/">www.Lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Becoming/</a>
<b>Billing</b> instructions and forms	Chapter 2: <a href="#">Information for All Providers</a>
<b>Fee schedules</b> for all healthcare facility services	L&I's website: <a href="https://lni.wa.gov/patient-care/billing-payments/fee-schedules-and-payment-policies/">https://lni.wa.gov/patient-care/billing-payments/fee-schedules-and-payment-policies/</a>
<b>Independent Medical Exams</b>	Chapter 13: <a href="#">Independent Medical Exams (IME)</a>
<b>Interpretive Services</b>	Chapter 14: <a href="#">Interpretive Services</a>

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