
Vote YES for Telehealth HB 3498 (Conroy)

Sinai Chicago (Sinai) is the largest private safety-net provider in the State of Illinois, with 92% of our patients insured by Medicaid, Medicare, and uninsured, and a service reach of 1.5 Million people. Sinai is comprised of 7 entities: Mount Sinai Hospital (MSH), Sinai Children’s Hospital, Holy Cross Hospital (HCH) and Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital (SRH), 8 free-standing neighborhood clinics run by Sinai Medical Group, a research entity in Sinai Urban Health Institute and our community programs run through Sinai Community Institute.

Sinai serves Chicago’s West and Southwest sides and provides care for patients with some of the highest co-morbidity rates in the city who live in communities hardest hit by COVID-19. During the second wave of COVID-19 in Fall 2020, the seven-day COVID positivity rate in the zip code in which HCH is located, 60628, was at 28%. In the zip code in which MSH is located, 60608, the positivity rate was over 9% and climbing. In these communities, issues of transportation, child care, senior care and mobility often impede access to some types of essential patient care.

Telehealth has allowed Sinai Chicago to continue to provide vital services to our community when it has been needed most, and we strongly support efforts to make current telehealth flexibilities permanent for the following reasons:

- Sinai did not have a telehealth platform prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Telehealth is now available for use with:
 - Sinai Medical Group Primary Care and Specialty Clinics
 - Sinai Behavioral Health for therapy and medication management
 - Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital for rehabilitation services and physical therapy
 - Sinai Urban Institute’s Community Health Worker patient outreach
- Since March 2020, Sinai’s telehealth usage increased from 264 calls in March 2020 to 12,000 calls in August 2020. Today, telehealth monthly usage is an average of over 6000 visits—with an anticipated increase as telehealth continues to be expanded throughout the Sinai Chicago healthcare system.
- Although telehealth is used throughout a variety of practices, the top three telehealth uses by specialty are:
 - Behavioral health
 - Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
 - Family Medicine
- Telehealth at Sinai has made it possible for physicians and other clinical staff to prescribe medications, provide patient education and allowed Sinai’s community health workers to continue their health outreach and community programs, such as in our elder abuse program.

- Telehealth has also allowed clinicians at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital to physically see and assess the space in which patients live, a critical addition for the care of Schwab’s patients.
- Because of telehealth, missed appointments have significantly decreased by almost 30%.
- In addition to the newly-installed patient telehealth platforms, Sinai’s newly created digital health team built an outward facing COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool, accessible on Sinai’s website. This tool, available in both English and Spanish, was developed for individuals to determine if they may need to be tested for COVID-19 or seek urgent medical assistance, without leaving their homes. Using self-reported data related to known exposure, symptoms, and comorbidities, this tool provides customized end-messages for the user, which at times have resulted in a video conference visit with a physician. High risk responses receive a telephonic visit as well.
- Sinai’s digital health team developed a three-year strategic plan to make telehealth a permanent practice throughout the healthcare system. This plan allows for: 1) increased patient communication and access to their provider, 2) patients to manage chronic diseases at home, and 3) improved data collection and analytical systems.
- The Sinai digital health strategic plan includes investments in additional telehealth tools such as:
 - Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) allowing for continuity of care beyond the traditional office visit. Sinai has launched a Diabetes Management platform in March 2021 to allow patients to upload glucose and other data remotely, which can then be reviewed by the clinic staff and physicians. The plan with RPM is to expand this footprint to other disease states that impact our community
 - Enhanced patient interactive features for more accessible use, like a virtual assistant to help navigate patients through the patient portal and healthcare system, online registration for appointments including intake forms to help nurses triage patients prior to their visit
 - Creation of a chat box and symptom checker
 - Implementation of webcams and iPads at all outpatient clinic locations
 - Development of a patient-facing Telehealth On-Demand tool

Absent action from the Illinois General Assembly, Sinai will not have the certainty it needs to maintain, extend, and expand its telehealth practice to its most vulnerable and hardest to reach patients, who have so heavily relied on telehealth to continue care during the pandemic.

Sinai Chicago urges you to vote YES on HB 3498 (Conroy)

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