

Medicare Telehealth Flexibility Expiration Leaves Rural Americans on 'Healthcare Cliff' at Midnight Tonight

Frontier Psychiatry CEO Warns Expiring Medicare Flexibilities Threaten Access to Life-Saving Care for Millions in Rural Communities

BILLINGS, MT, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the clock

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approaches midnight tonight, millions of rural Americans face the prospect of losing critical access to telehealth services as key Medicare flexibilities expire, potentially creating a healthcare crisis in communities already struggling with provider shortages and geographic barriers to care.

Dr. Eric Arzubi, CEO and Co-Founder of [Frontier Psychiatry](#), a leading all-virtual psychiatric care provider serving rural communities across Montana, Idaho, and Alaska, warns that the expiration of these Medicare telehealth flexibilities will disproportionately devastate rural Americans who depend on virtual care for essential medical and mental

health services.

"The uncertainty around these Medicare flexibilities hurts rural communities. There is constant anxiety whether telemedicine will disappear all of a sudden among our patients. And it's impossible for us to plan for the future with the looming expiration of flexibilities.," said Dr. Arzubi, a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist who has dedicated his career to expanding access to psychiatric care in underserved areas.

Rural Communities Face Unique Challenges

Rural Americans, who represent approximately 20% of the U.S. population, face significant barriers to healthcare access even under normal circumstances. More than 70% of rural counties lack a single psychiatrist. So, before access to telehealth services, patients often drove four or more hours for a 30-minute appointment. Telehealth has become a lifeline for communities that would otherwise go without essential care.

The expiration of Medicare telehealth flexibilities will force rural patients to choose between:

- Driving hundreds of miles for in-person appointments, often requiring time off work and school
- Going without necessary medical and psychiatric care
- Seeking emergency room care for conditions that could be managed through telehealth

Impact on Mental Health Care Access

The implications for mental health care in rural communities are particularly severe. Rural areas experience higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, and mental health crises, yet have the least access to specialized psychiatric care. Frontier Psychiatry's data demonstrates the critical need: the organization has successfully provided care to all 56 counties in Montana and has achieved a 38% reduction in hospitalization rates for Medicaid patients through consistent telehealth services.

"Before deploying telehealth services, I had patients who drove four hours to see me for a half-hour visit. Moms taking time off work, kids leaving school, all bearing the expense and burden of travel," Dr. Arzubi explained. "Telehealth has eliminated these barriers and allowed us to deliver the same quality of care available in major academic centers to small towns across the rural West."

Economic and Healthcare System Impact

The loss of telehealth flexibilities will create ripple effects throughout rural healthcare systems:

- Provider Sustainability: Rural healthcare organizations will struggle to maintain psychiatric and specialty services without telehealth reimbursement
- Emergency Department Strain: Rural hospitals will face increased emergency visits for mental health crises and conditions that could be managed through telehealth
- Economic Burden: Families will face increased transportation costs, lost wages, and reduced access to timely care

Call to Action

Dr. Arzubi and Frontier Psychiatry join the American Telemedicine Association ([ATA Action](#)) and healthcare advocates nationwide in urging Congress and the Trump administration to act immediately to extend or permanently enact these critical Medicare telehealth flexibilities.

"We're asking Congress to not leave millions of patients and healthcare providers dangling on the telehealth cliff," Dr. Arzubi emphasized. "Rural Americans deserve the same access to quality healthcare as those in urban centers. These flexibilities have been transformative for our communities, and letting them expire would reverse years of progress in making healthcare more accessible and patient-centered."

About Frontier Psychiatry

Founded in March 2020, Frontier Psychiatry is an all-telehealth practice dedicated to delivering evidence-based psychiatric and addiction treatment to rural and frontier communities. With approximately 30 providers serving patients across Montana, Idaho, and Alaska, the organization focuses on making high-quality psychiatric care accessible to underserved populations. Dr. Arzubi previously served as Chair of Psychiatry at Billings Clinic, where he led the creation of Montana's first psychiatry residency training program and emergency psychiatry unit.

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