

## Report on Patient Privacy Volume 22, Number 10. October 06, 2022 GAO: OCR Should Educate Providers On Telehealth Privacy, Security Risks

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Telehealth services increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in response, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommends that HHS' Office for Civil Rights (OCR) provide additional education and outreach to providers to help them explain the privacy and security risks of telehealth.

In a report issued Sept. 26, GAO also recommended that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) strengthen its telehealth oversight to assess the quality of Medicare services, including audio-only services, delivered using telehealth during the pandemic public health emergency.<sup>[1]</sup>

"To help patients access care during the pandemic, Medicare temporarily waived restrictions on telehealth — health care services delivered via phone or video. The use of telehealth services rose tenfold: 53 million telehealth visits in April–December 2020 vs. 5 million during the same period in 2019," the report said.

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