

Strengthen Primary Care: Ensure Appropriate Payment Talking Points

- Evaluation and management (E/M) codes are used to bill for office visits that include diagnosis and management of patients' chronic conditions, treatment of acute illnesses, and development of care plans and are the core of primary care.
- Despite the increased complexity of primary care, E/M services have been undervalued relative to other services in the Medicare physician fee schedule.
- Primary care spending represents less than 5% of total spending by Parts A, B, and D of the Medicare program.
- Now more than ever, patients need access to the continuous, comprehensive care that primary care provides. **Congress must ensure that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services implements its plan for scheduled increases to Medicare E/M payments on January 1, 2021.**
- While Medicare reimbursement policy is one way to address the undervaluation of primary care, Medicaid payment rates must keep pace.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of individuals who are eligible for Medicaid, which further increases the demand for primary care physicians. But in many places, they are unable to take on new patients because of low payment rates.
- Nationwide, Medicaid payment is 66% of the Medicare rate for primary care services and can be as low as 33% of the Medicare rate, depending on the state.
- **Congress should enact legislation now to increase Medicaid payment rates for primary care to at least Medicare levels and expand patients' access to care.**
- **Cosponsor** the House bill *Kids Access to Primary Care Act* ([H.R. 6159](#)) and the Senate bill, *Ensuring Access to Primary Care for Women and Children Act*