

**Report to the
Joint Commission on Health Care**

**on
State Employee Health Insurance
Telemedicine Benefit**

September 2011



Virginia Department of Human Resource Management

During the 2010 General Assembly Session, legislation was enacted mandating that most Virginia-regulated health insurance products as well as the state employee health plan provide payments for telemedicine services. Accordingly, the Commonwealth's Health Benefits Program began covering telemedicine services in 2011.

In accordance with the 2010 Virginia Senate Bill No. 675, the state health benefits program defines telemedicine as use of interactive audio, video, or other telecommunications technology by a health care provider to deliver health care services within the scope of the provider's practice at a site other than the site where the patient is located, including the use of electronic media for consultation relating to the health care diagnosis or treatment of the patient. Examples of telemedicine services offered under the health plan include:

- Infectious diseases
- Rheumatology
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Urology
- Endocrinology
- Psychiatry

As of September 1, 2011, the state employee health plan paid two (2) telemedicine claims, one apiece for two (2) members, both of which involved psychiatry services. Although utilization has been low, we anticipate utilization of telemedicine will increase as word spreads about the availability of the benefit and more providers purchase the equipment needed to provide telemedicine services.