

# Telehealth: Opportunities and Risks Accompanying Continued Growth

Lunch and Learn Topic

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TOPIC:**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Federal waivers functioned as inter-related catalysts to healthcare industry-wide exponential growth in the use of telehealth. Many organizations rushed an array of fragmented resources to their medical staffs and community residents to enhance access to care. While the number of telehealth visits has declined as patients return to in-person care, utilization remains 38X higher than pre-pandemic levels. Telehealth remains popular with consumers in all age cohorts. Consequently, a large and growing number of hospitals and health systems are striving to convert their initially fragmented approach to a more comprehensive and cohesive strategy.

## **SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE COVERED:**

- Current status of the 1135 Federal waiver enabling telehealth
- Clarifying the distinction between digital health, telehealth, and telemedicine and where within that realm hospitals and health systems are focused
- Strategic and operational decisions that hospitals and health systems have been making as they convert an initial “hurried” and often “piecemeal” approach to a comprehensive and cohesive telehealth strategy
- Fit of telehealth with physician alignment, CIN/ACO, and payer contracting
- Discussion on areas of potential legal risk and potential opportunities for legal counsel in assisting hospitals and health systems