

# Preparing for the Next Public Health Emergency

Investment in Broadband Infrastructure to Improve Public Health Outcomes

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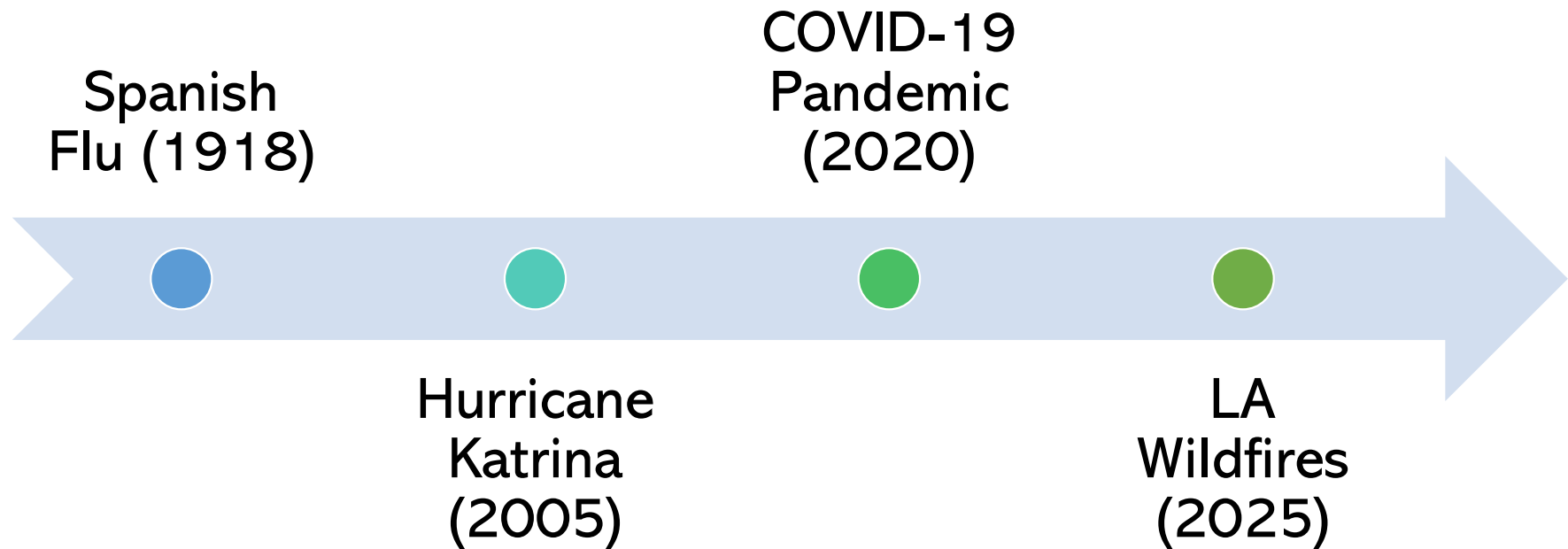
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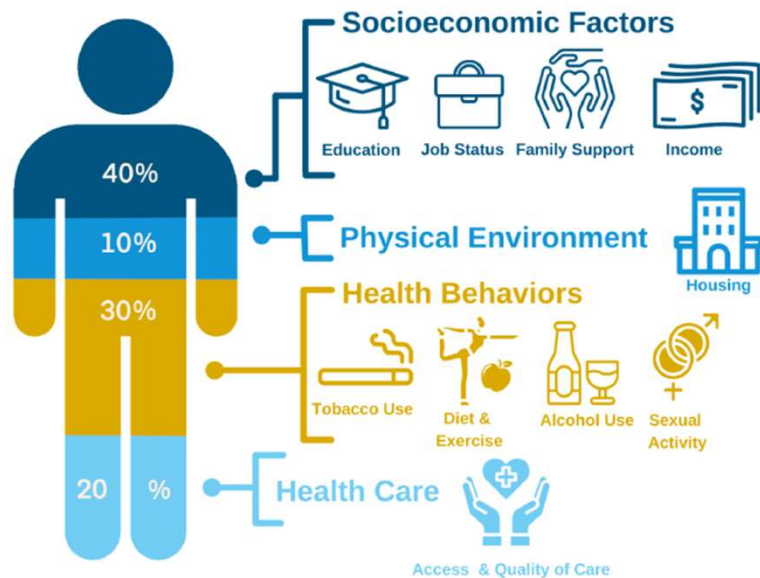
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Technology Has Played A Critical Role in Addressing Each Public Health Emergency



## Broadband as a 'Super' Social Determinant of Health



Source: [UCLA Health, Social Determinants of Health](#)

- Broadband directly or indirectly impacts each of our social determinants of health (SDOH)
- Direct impact: access to and quality of care
- Indirect impact: on all other SDOH, which influence our health, wellbeing and quality of life
- Both the direct and indirect impacts together drive public health outcomes
- Caveat: Broadband also enables unintended consequences (e.g., school shutdown)

## The Role of Broadband in Bridging Access to Care & Addressing Public Health Crisis

- Access to care:
  - Access to telehealth services
  - Access to health information online
  - Telepharmacy: remote access to pharmaceutical services (e.g., delivery of prescription medication)
  - Remote patient monitoring
  - Booking vaccine appointments online
  - Booking COVID-19 tests online
- Public Health:
  - Tracking CDC mask mandates
  - Vaccine and testing guidance
  - Public health surveillance to monitor quarantine requirements and inform individuals of potential exposure after interaction with someone who tested positive
  - Addressing social isolation (staying connected while avoiding exposure)

## **Federal Laws and Policies that Leveraged Broadband Infrastructure to Address the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency**

- **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 2021**
  - Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (later replaced by the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP))
  - Digital Equity Act (DEA) (no longer in effect)
  - Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD)
- **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, 2020**
- **Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020**
- **Connected Care Pilot Program, 2020**
- **Rural Health Care Program (Universal Service Fund)**

## State and Local Policies and Initiatives that Leverage Broadband Infrastructure to Advance Public Health Outcomes and Access to Care

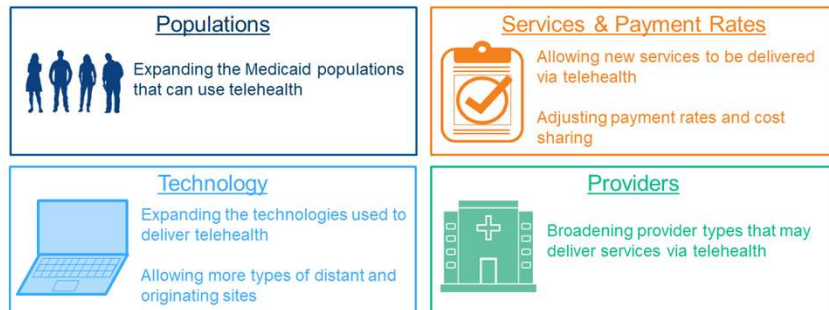
Initiative / Program	Description
<a href="#">New York Health Equity Reform 1115 Waiver Amendment</a>	Proposed to create state-wide digital health and telehealth infrastructure
<a href="#">California Virtual Health Hub for Rural Communities Pilot Program</a>	This bill would expand access to health care services for farmworkers in rural communities by connecting them with their providers virtually
<a href="#">Affordable Broadband Capabilities in Fairfax County</a>	Cleveland Clinic partnered with community partners to provide affordable broadband to Cleveland neighborhood
<a href="#">The Institute of Telehealth and Digital Innovation (ITDI)</a>	ITDI at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center established by the state legislature
<a href="#">L.A.U.N.C.H Collaborative (Linking &amp; Amplifying User-Centered Networks through Connected Health)</a>	Launched by the FCC and NCI, with an initial focus on lung cancer incidence rate in Kentucky

# How Shifts in Health Policy May Affect the Relationship between Broadband and Public Health

## Health Policy During the PHE

Figure 1

In response to COVID-19, states are expanding telehealth in Medicaid by making adjustments to key areas:



SOURCE: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), [State Medicaid & CHIP Telehealth Toolkit](#), April 2020, as well as KFF analysis of Medicaid telehealth guidance posted to state websites.



## Health Policy Today

- Cuts to Medicaid may lead states to make difficult decisions regarding determining eligibility, reducing benefits, lowering provider-payments, and shifting costs to enrollees.
  - For example, lack of reliable broadband access in rural areas will create additional obstacles to completing state-level work requirements for eligible individuals, which will affect their Medicaid coverage and eligibility redeterminations, therefore worsening health outcomes.

Source: Howren MB, Hansen JR. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act—Implications for Rural Health Care. JAMA. Sept 03, 2025. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.13518

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**THANK YOU**