



# Making a “Tele-Difference” by Using Telemedicine to Aid Medically Vulnerable Populations

Prepared by:  
Nathaniel M. Lacktman, Esq.  
Chair, Telemedicine Industry Team  
Foley & Lardner LLP  
NLacktman@foley.com  
[www.foley.com/nlacktman](http://www.foley.com/nlacktman)

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# **Making a “Tele-Difference” by Using Telemedicine to Aid Medically Vulnerable Populations**

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More than 74 million individuals are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Another 28 million are currently uninsured. Due to the repeal of the individual mandate (the requirement under the Affordable Care Act to purchase insurance or face a financial penalty), the uninsured population is projected to increase to 32 million by 2019. Caring for these medically vulnerable populations is a challenge due to significant limitations on access to care as the cost of health care continues to rise. In addition to cost, the number of physicians available to provide care to these populations is limited and may become even more so. More than 36 percent of U.S. physicians are over the age of 55, and a similar proportion of U.S. physicians do not accept Medicaid or uninsured patients, making access to quality health care even more limited.

Underinsured patients living in inner cities and rural areas are particularly affected by local physician shortages and limited specialist services, making needed care less accessible or completely out of reach. Advancements in telemedicine technology allows providers to expand telemedicine specialty services offered in order to overcome geographic barriers and improve health care for underserved populations. By increasing access to care and expanding specialty services offered to rural communities, telemedicine providers are helping to decrease costs of untreated chronic disease most prevalent in these medically vulnerable populations.

### **Making a Tele-Difference by Improving Access to Care**

The lawyers in Foley's Telemedicine Industry Team are pleased to support The MAVEN Project (Medical Alumni Volunteer Expert Network), providing *pro bono* legal services to help advance its mission to improve access to care for vulnerable populations.

The MAVEN Project is a 501(c)(3) organization that facilitates timely access to quality medical expertise by matching its national corps of best-in-class volunteer physicians with organizations caring for underserved populations via telehealth. By linking expert volunteer physicians to clinics and

organizations in need, The MAVEN Project breaks down geographic barriers by providing services to organizations caring for underinsured patients living in inner cities and organizations making care available in rural areas that are most affected by physician shortages and limited specialist services.

The MAVEN Project is the first national organization to recruit physician volunteers through alumni and professional organizations and match their expertise to the needs of community clinics via telehealth technology.

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