

# 15 Settings Where Telebehavioral Health Is Transforming Access to Care

Telebehavioral Health Programs Aren't Just for Rural Areas



## 1. Emergency Departments

Telebehavioral health services in the ED improves department management and makes better use of available beds. Telebehavioral health specialists can conduct evaluations and aid the local healthcare team in properly diagnosing and caring for a consumer in crisis. Timely access to psychiatric assessment has been proven to reduce length of stays, increase regulatory compliance, shorten wait times, improve consumer satisfaction and help ensure consumers are receiving the most appropriate level of care.

## 2. Inpatient Units

Telebehavioral health services can be used to support an inpatient medical setting for weekend rounding, crisis response or after-hours admission services. Remote providers are able to integrate into the onsite system of care and regularly collaborate with onsite staff.

## 3. Residential Programs

Telebehavioral health is an important tool for residential programs, especially those in rural areas or who serve specialty populations like child and adolescents. With access to specialists and the ability to consult or collaborate with remote providers of all levels, onsite staff is able to offer better, more comprehensive care to their program residents without having to bring additional providers on location.

## 4. Outpatient Clinics

With telebehavioral health, outpatient clinics can have access to consistent remote providers who serve a regular caseload of consumers. Remote providers can conduct assessments,

offer medication management, participate in treatment team meetings or provide supervision. Outpatient clinics, especially those in rural areas that struggle to recruit and maintain providers, often rely on telebehavioral health to supplement their onsite services.

## 5. Universities

With the age of onset for many behavioral health disorders between the ages of 18 and 241, telebehavioral health is making a difference at universities. With access to specialists, prescribers and psychotherapy through telebehavioral health, college students are better prepared to handle whatever comes their way, without having to step off-campus.

## 6. In-home

Through the development of secure online behavioral health platforms, consumers are able to connect to behavioral health providers online. Ideal for people with limited mobility or busy schedules, this new medium of care is helping more people access behavioral health care. In-home telebehavioral health also allows for greater consumer choice with many online platforms allowing consumers to select their ideal provider and schedule appointments based on their needs.

## 7. Corrections

Correctional facilities use telebehavioral health to provide timely psychiatric care and evaluation while reducing transportation and supervision costs. Telebehavioral health allows facilities to be prepared for psychiatric crisis and address issues on site in a secure and familiar environment. At the same time,



appropriate medication management and routine care reduce the potential of escalation and psychiatric emergencies.

## 8. Nursing Homes

With an aging population and an increasing prevalence of behavioral health issues, there is a growing need to bring psychiatric care into skilled nursing facilities, independent living complexes and progressive continuum communities. With telebehavioral health, these facilities can access scheduled or on demand services without an individual having to travel. Research indicates telebehavioral health's acceptability is high among mature adults, their families and staff.

## 9. Primary Care Offices

Studies indicate that primary care providers recognize and diagnose less than half of mental disorders present in their patients<sup>2</sup>. With telebehavioral health, primary care offices can offer onsite screening for behavioral health disorders as well as offer consultative services on treatment and medication.

## 10. Mobile Crisis Units

Some communities have mobile crisis teams who respond to individuals in the community who are going through a difficult episode. With access to behavioral health specialists through technology, these teams are further empowered to manage crisis situations. Mobile crisis telebehavioral allows consumers to be served by experts in their homes that reduces the need for traveling to an emergency department.

## 11. Substance Use Treatment Centers

The increasing prevalence of co-occurring substance use and mental health issues results in an increasing need for psychiatrists or nurse practitioners to engage in the treatment team of addictions treatment programs, often to prescribe medications. This unique population requires access to specialists they can often only receive remotely through telebehavioral health, especially if the facility is located in a rural area.

## 12. ACOs

Telebehavioral health services at Accountable Care Organizations empower consumers and engage them further in their behavioral health and overall wellness. By offering services across the spectrum, from crisis telepsychiatry to routine psychotherapy, and connecting multiple locations and sites through technology, telebehavioral health is an excellent tool for ACOs.

## 13. Cruise Ships

Cruise ships are now incorporating telebehavioral health into their healthcare services. The need for behavioral health care can arise anywhere, even the middle of the ocean. New, on-board programs offer passengers the chance to speak with the appropriate level of behavioral health professional.

## 14. FQHCs

Facing budget constraints, many community-based organizations choose to supplement their onsite services with telebehavioral health providers. A popular model combines a remote psychiatric prescriber team that uses psychiatric nurse practitioners working in tandem with a psychiatrist. This model is both cost-effective and offers expanded behavioral health care capacity. Additionally, integrated models using telebehavioral health help some organizations meet their state's regulations.

## 15. Military

The Army News Service Reports that "As part of an increasing commitment to addressing behavioral health care for Soldiers, families, and retirees, several telebehavioral health initiatives are under way."<sup>3</sup> With telebehavioral health, geographic distance, provider availability, and other obstacles of face-to-face care are managed and active duty soldiers, veterans and their families are able to receive much needed behavioral health care where they may otherwise have extremely long wait times or go completely without.

1) <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2005/mental-illness-exacts-heavy-toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml>

2) Pirl, W.F.; Beck, B.J.; Safren, S. A.; Kim, H. (2001). "A descriptive study of psychiatric consultations in a community primary care center". *Primary Care Companion Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 3 (5): 190-194. doi:10.4088/PCC.v03n0501

3) <http://www.army.mil/article/33282/commentary-tele-behavioral-healthcare-to-help-where-needed>