

The Benefits of Leveraging Virtual Behavioral Health Services for Inpatient Care

Finding and retaining providers for inpatient care can be challenging. From geographic barriers to the ongoing provider shortage, ensuring patients have regular, dedicated access to behavioral health specialists isn't always easy.

Fortunately, leveraging virtual care programs can help augment staff, provide multiple layers of support across your behavioral health program, and provide the specialty care your patients can count on.

When integrated into inpatient care units, virtual behavioral health programs help connect patients to timely, effective care led by a quality provider.

This integration of virtual with inpatient care not only helps alleviate behavioral health provider staffing shortages impacting inpatient psychiatric units, but also enables clinicians to practice and the top of their licenses to improve total cost of care and provider satisfaction.



Why virtual behavioral health is a good fit for inpatient care

The high-demand for behavioral healthcare means patients need care now.

Depressive disorder is the most common cause of hospitalization among

patients under 18.¹

With no behavioral health providers on-site, patients seek care elsewhere.

54% of 2,300 U.S. hospitals

surveyed had no psychiatrist on staff or available for medical ED or inpatient consultations.

59% of hospitals

transferred patients to another hospital due to lack of behavioral health providers, creating leakage within the health system.²

Long-term hospitalization creates bigger costs.

Patients who stay within the health system beyond

30 days

can create additional healthcare costs of

\$2,265 per stay.³

Fortunately, Behavioral Health Integration creates a simple solution.

Inpatient integrated behavioral health model resulted

70% return on investment.⁴

By bringing in a virtual behavioral health provider, patients can get the care they need, health systems can avoid leakage, and provider time can be used more effectively.

Sources

1. <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

2. [https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(21\)00847-8/fulltext](https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(21)00847-8/fulltext)

3. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/strategy/behavioral-health-s-impact-on-the-emergency-department.html>

4. https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2023/12/Environmental_Scan_2024.pdf



The benefits of a virtual care approach

Continuity of care

Building the provider-patient relationship through consistent care is crucial to the patient experience. For example, if a patient must stay in inpatient care for two weeks, seeing a different provider each week can be disruptive. However, with Scheduled Services, patients can build relationships with their providers and not have to re-tell their stories.

“To have an established Iris Telehealth provider was incredibly important because it created reliability on the unit. We knew exactly what we were working with when we had the physician. She was very reliable, and it created continuity of care.”

Laura Taylor
Program Director of
Psychiatry at Carilion Clinic
Iris Telehealth Partner



On how Iris providers fit into inpatient workflows:

“We have our systems in place in terms of our morning rounds. We have the computer system up and running. We recently just got a fish-eye lens camera, so I have better visibility of seeing everyone in the morning meetings.”

Dr. Tisa Ayuso
Medical Director at Bassett Health Network
Iris Telehealth Provider

Care team integration

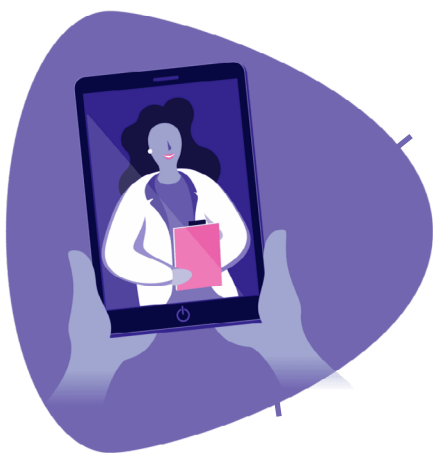
A successful team of on-site and virtual providers is technically, culturally, and logistically well-integrated. Through Scheduled Services, your virtual behavioral health provider fits seamlessly into your team's schedule. That way, they can minimize disruption to care team logistics and ensure continuity of care for patients.



The benefits of a virtual care approach

High-quality providers

Finding the right specialty provider for your organization during a provider shortage is challenging. However, with the right telehealth partner and virtual care approach, your organization has a bigger pool of providers to select from to help your patients get the care they need.



“We thought in the long term, [telehealth] was going to create a situation where we could offer more flexibility when looking at full-time staff members. Even if they weren’t working full-time in a virtual capacity, they would have that tool as part of their tool belt.

It’s an important arrow in our quiver to be able to expand virtual health to include providing services on the inpatient end.”

Dr. James Anderson

Chief of the Department of Psychiatry at
Bassett Health Network
Iris Telehealth Partner



On the cascading benefits of virtual care:

“Virtual care technology saves patients time and money, reduces patient transfers, emergency department and urgent care center visits, and delivers savings to payers. In addition, telehealth helps address physician burnout by reducing clinicians’ drive times and allowing more time for patients.”

The American Hospital Association

Provider retention and satisfaction

Retaining providers becomes much easier with the right virtual behavioral health partner. While you have a better selection of specialty providers, you’re also better positioned to keep them for the long term. For example, when a provider has a major life change, like a move, they don’t have to change jobs. Additionally, at Iris, we’ve found this flexibility has helped improve things like work-life balance and has helped us achieve a 94% provider satisfaction rate.

4 top qualities of a supportive telehealth

Choosing the right behavioral health partner means working with someone who is both strategic and supportive. At Iris, this supportive approach takes shape in four unique ways.

Here are the qualities we've found make a successful partnership:

1. The Iris Match

The Iris Match is our promise to organizations that ensures they find a provider match that meets their organization's needs, culture, and values. This in-depth process looks at the clinical preferences of the providers, the needs of the organization and helps find the best match for both. So, whether your organization could use the help of a psychiatrist, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, or a licensed therapy provider, we match you with someone your patients and care team will love.

2. Clinical alignment support

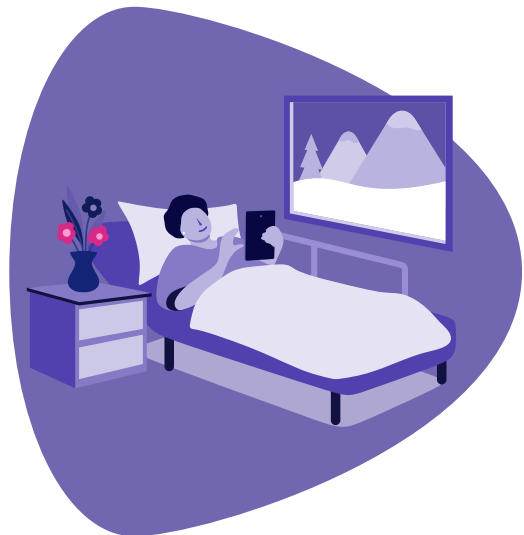
At Iris, our team of clinical alignment executives (CAEs) serve as the primary point of contact for our partners, get to know their teams, help expand partnerships, and find new ways to deliver care.

3. Licensing and credentialing

A key component that can decrease provider satisfaction and stand as a barrier between patients and their care is licensing and credentialing. At Iris, our team of licensing and credentialing specialists help streamline the process and make sure providers are licensed in your state, regardless of where they're located. This process helps ensure providers can get started at your hospital sooner.

4. Quality management services

At Iris, we help ensure the clinical and financial impact of your Scheduled Services and provider team. Together, we look at quality measures and share guidance on how the program is running. By monitoring, evaluating, and creating initiatives to improve on selected metrics, your organization is well-positioned to meet your key behavioral health goals.



"Virtual care is helping healthcare industry rethink our models and how we care for patients, both in acute care settings like inpatient units and partial hospital programs. Across the spectrum of care, virtual care continues to impact patients' lives in ways that those of us in behavioral health care can really see."

Dr. Thomas Milam
Chief Medical Officer
Iris Telehealth

Alleviate staffing challenges
in your inpatient psych units.

Transform the patient and
provider experience.

Assist on-site providers with
behavioral health clinicians.

At Iris, we're proud to partner with organizations to help connect their organizations with high-quality providers who help their populations thrive. If you'd like to learn more about our services, you can [find more information here](#). Or, if you'd like to talk to someone and find out how Scheduled Services could work for your organization, [contact us today!](#)

