

How Health Systems can Increase Quality Care Virtually

Scaling behavioral health services to provide timely access to quality care to your community can feel daunting. Especially when you add the financial challenges, and the increased complexity of managing virtual and on-site teams – everything becomes more demanding. Fortunately, health systems are navigating these challenges to help ensure patients receive quality, sustainable behavioral health care across the continuum.

In this piece, we'll cover those strategies and share how top healthcare leaders from Allina Health and Geisinger are leveraging their partnership with Iris to provide high-quality, scalable, and sustainable patient care.

The impact of integrated behavioral health care on quality

A report from BMC Psychiatry found that an estimated 25% of adults have a mental health condition, and 68% have a comorbid medical condition.¹

The overlap between medical and behavioral health conditions is part of what makes integrated care essential. In fact, providing whole-person care to your population can increase quality treatment for patients, help control costs, improve access, and increase patient satisfaction.²

The Common Wealth Fund reports that 80% of patients with behavioral health concerns present in the ED or primary care clinics where resources like provider time and proper training to treat behavioral health conditions are lacking. They also highlight estimates that say 60-70% of these patients never receive treatment for behavioral health conditions even though treatment would increase the odds of recovering from their medical conditions.³

Geisinger, a health system serving rural and urban Pennsylvania, partners with Iris Telehealth to support their patient populations. Dawn Zieger, Vice President of Behavioral Health and Psychiatry at Geisinger, shared the prioritizing patient quality of life:

"It's important to look at quality of life and see if people are getting healthier. We're building that foundation of quality, but not only from the behavioral health aspect. We want to look at it from the whole-person care perspective."

Zieger also shared the importance of joining forces with a behavioral health partner during a provider shortage:

"We've been able to recruit some amazing doctors that we wouldn't be able to draw to this rural community. We've integrated inpatient telepsychiatry with in-person appointments, so we've got the best of both worlds."



Tips from Healthcare Leaders on Maintaining Quality Operations

Allina Health, a health system based in Minnesota, partners with Iris Telehealth to scale their behavioral health services and increase access for their patient populations.

Here are three ways Allina Health leverages their partnership with Iris Telehealth to maintain quality operations, according to Joe Clubb, Vice President of Operations at Allina Health:

1. Regular meetings to review quality measures:

“The infrastructure we put together is meeting both virtually and in-person with Iris on a quarterly basis. We meet together to do a retrospective review and think about the future together.”

2. Monitoring quality metrics:

“We are held to outcome measures and quality measures within Allina Health. We met with Iris, and were very transparent in sharing the outcome measures we put out there for safety, quality, and finances. We aligned those with everything from length of stay to PHQ-9 outcome measures.”

3. High-quality care:

“Allina leverages telehealth services to provide vacation coverage to inpatient units. Reflecting on this component, Clubb said, “It’s tough to staff 250 beds and providers need to go on vacation. We have full-time Iris providers that cover our inpatient units. The feedback I got from the leader of one of our geriatric units is how impressed everybody was at how well the Iris provider knew the patient and their family, and that they joined the conference. Everybody there was in person and the Iris provider was virtually there.”

The Benefits of Tracking Quality Measures and Programming

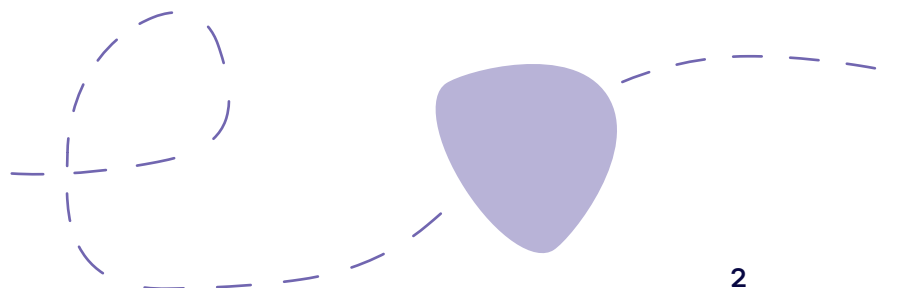
Working with a partner who helps your organization track quality metrics can significantly benefit your organization.

Here are a few ways tracking quality can benefit your organization:

- Improves patient outcomes and ratings on publicly reported measures
- Improves patient satisfaction and positive reviews
- Increases efficiency and resource utilization
- Helps organization meet accreditation, certification, and regulatory requirements
- Helps organizations meet performance standards on national programs
- Reinforces evidence-based best practices
- Enables objective comparison with similar organizations
- Facilitates improvement based on objective, actionable data

“I just spoke with a payer yesterday and I asked, ‘If you’re looking at quality, what’s coming through your door, knowing that 90% of my outpatient services are virtual, what are you seeing?’ They said, ‘Your notes are more robust and the way you’re approaching things is much stronger.’ So from an outside perspective, they’re seeing no inequity between in-person virtual. In fact we are seeing a higher quality output from virtual care across the board.”

Dawn Zieger,
VP of Behavioral Health and Psychiatry at Geisinger



A Strategic Behavioral Health Partnership

By partnering with Iris, Geisinger and Allina Health have made significant improvements in their operations.

Here are a few ways Allina has felt the impact of a strategic behavioral health partnership at their organization:

- Reduction in length of stay in their MedSurg units by **0.5 days**
- Increased ED discharge rate from **55% to 62%**
- Reduction in ED length of stay from **12 hours to 9 hours**
- Appointment attendance increased by **10%**
- Patient satisfaction scores improved by **5%**

At Iris, we're proud to partner with Geisinger and Allina Health and help them scale their behavioral health programs. In a recent webinar, we showcased our partnership, discussing their approach to scaling behavioral health across the care continuum and how they're leveraging telehealth to improve quality care at their organizations.

If you'd like to hear more of their insights into behavioral health, you can [watch the webinar here](#).

Additionally, if you'd like to learn more about integrating quality behavioral health programs into your hospital or health system, contact us today [contact us today](#) to get started!

1. Sprah, L., Zvezdana Dernovsek, M., Wahlbeck, K., & Haaramo, P. (2017, January 3). Psychiatric readmissions and their association with Physical Comorbidity: A systematic literature review - BMC psychiatry. BioMed Central.
2. American Psychiatric Association . (n.d.). Learn About the Collaborative Care Model. Psychiatry.org . <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/professional-interests/integrated-care/learn>
3. Klein, S., & Hostetter, M. (2014, August 28). In Focus: Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care. Commonwealth Fund. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/newsletter-article/2014/aug/focus-integrating-behavioral-health-and-primary-care>

