

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

The benefits of telebehavioral health



Dignity Health® is a nonprofit health system principally serving California, Arizona, and Nevada. Since 2008, the Dignity Health Telemedicine Network (DHTN) has leveraged a centralized infrastructure and team of resources that now serves 39 different locations at both Dignity Health and non-Dignity Health facilities.

The Challenge

To achieve their goal of improving timely access to quality care, the DHTN wished to expand their telemedicine services to new offerings. They decided to add telebehavioral health services in their hospitals to increase access to behavioral health professionals and meet standards of care recommended by the Joint Commission.

Nearly 20% of the U.S. population have a diagnosable behavioral health condition yet only 66% of these psychiatric needs are currently being met.¹

The Solution

The Joint Commission recommends patient boarding times not exceed four hours in the interest of patient safety and quality of care. To address this request, the DHTN in collaboration with local behavioral health process improvement implemented a “Round and Respond” like model to improve access to behavioral health specialists in several hospital emergency departments.

Using Teladoc Health, the DHTN scheduled telebehavioral health rounds and rapid response to provide a disposition recommendation, usually to

discharge or transfer the patient. The ED physician is able to complete a rapid medical assessment and triage the patients as mild, moderate, or severe based upon patient risk. This allows the DHTN to provide 24/7 consultative support services to meet all behavioral health needs.

Additional telebehavioral health services were added as a consultation-liaison service. the DHTN also provides psychiatric services including geropsychiatric and child and adolescent treatment, opioid crisis management, chronic co-morbid conditions, and crisis intervention with medication assisted treatment.

The Results

Based on previous models, the DHTN created a mental health evaluation timeline that mirrors a stroke response timeline, which tracks time from request to consult. Analyzing these metrics, the DHTN found that the benefits of telebehavioral health satisfied their main objectives: a decrease in length of stay, a decrease in cost, an increase in satisfaction, and expectations of care met. Additionally, high adoption and utilization rates were achieved resulting in 1,200 telebehavioral health consultations per month through three states and across 25 hospitals.

During this study, the DHTN observed that 95% of telebehavioral health consults occur in the ED. The DHTN's standard of care is to respond to all ED behavioral health consult requests within 60 minutes, have actionable recommendations within 90 minutes, and empower local providers to create an ED disposition plan within the first four hours.

The telebehavioral health service at Dignity Health is a distinguished example for how to improve timely access to behavioral health professionals across the care continuum including EDs, inpatient units, outpatient services, and community-based care settings. This model of care will also enable the nation to help address the increasing shortage of physicians as the U.S. population grows and ages, and as physician workforce patterns change in response to increasing pressures.



These services allowed for 61% of cases to be seen within 30 minutes; 79% of patients were seen within 60 minutes. The DHTN also reported a 65% rate for discharge recommendations and a 35% rate for transfer at specific locations.

Using telebehavioral health services, the DHTN observed²

5 min.

average phone response time

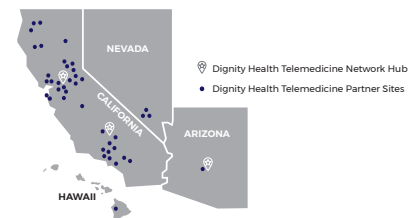
42 min.

average time to bedside

85 min.

average time to consult note

DHTN serves 52 locations across four states



¹ MHA, 2017 and Suisse Equity Research Report, 2018

² Jan 2018 – July 2019

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