TELEBEHAVIORAL HEALTH
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MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

• 2019: 10% of Americans reported anxiety or depression

• 2020: 40% reported anxiety or depression (56% for young adults)
  • 13% reported substance misuse due to pandemic
  • 20,000 more people died from drug overdoses
  • 11% of adults contemplated suicide in past 30 days
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE
RURAL AND URBAN DISPARITIES

• Prevalence of mental health issues is similar, but access to behavioral health providers is worse in rural areas than in urban areas.
• Behavioral health providers in rural areas are less likely to have specialized training.
• Disparities are exacerbated for minority populations.
• Lack of minority representation in behavioral health professions
INCREASING WORKFORCE DEMANDS

• 60% of rural residents live in a behavioral health provider shortage area

• Only 9% of nation’s physicians practice in rural areas

• Problem is exacerbated for behavioral health specialists
  • 81% of rural areas lack psychiatric nurse practitioners
  • 65% lack psychiatrists
  • 47% lack psychologists
INCREASING DISPARITIES

COVID highlighted the digital divide facing rural communities

- 28% of rural households lack broadband internet
- Estimated cost to reach them ~ $150 billion

Poor infrastructure inhibits access

- 40% of roads “inadequate for current travel”
- Little, if any, public transportation

Less likely to have health insurance or a usual source of health care
RECENT TRENDS

• Social distancing policies linked to an increase in intimate partner violence in rural areas
  • Rural women 7% more likely to be a victim than urban women
  • 1 of 3 female homicides linked to IPV
  • Intimate partner violence victims are more likely to attempt suicide

• Lower levels of trust in public health
  • 66% of rural residents trust CDC, generally, but 86% trust their health care provider
TELEHEALTH’S POTENTIAL

• Alleviate some disparities
• Connect rural residents to behavioral health providers
  • Of rural residents who received telehealth services, **14%** said they otherwise would not have sought care
  • **5%** of telehealth appointments in 2021 were for mental health problems or substance misuse
TELEBEHAVIORAL HEALTH
DEFINITIONS

• Telehealth: “The use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to support long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, health administration, and public health.”

• Telebehavioral Health: “Any telehealth services delivered by behavioral health professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.”
CURRENT POLICY TRENDS

• As of July 2021, telehealth use was 38 times greater than before the pandemic.
• Policy flexibilities have led to more use of telehealth for behavioral health concerns.
• Some Medicare policies are permanent; others will end 151 days after the end of the public health emergency.
• States can make permanent changes to Medicaid through state plan amendments or 1115 waivers.
BARRIERS

• Broadband

• Workforce shortages:
  • In 2017, HRSA predicted shortages of psychiatrists and addiction counselors in 2030
  • Due to pandemic, this shortage is already occurring

*Telehealth alone cannot fully mitigate rural access issues without more behavioral health providers.*
USES

- Four types of telebehavioral health interventions
  - Hospital care
  - Integrated primary care
  - Mobile health applications
  - Direct-to-consumer services
- Live video is most common modality
- Uses of telebehavioral health
  - Medication-assisted treatment for substance use
  - Integrated health systems
  - Crisis response
DURING THE PANDEMIC

• Successes
  • 85% of psychologists using telebehavioral health versus only 7% prior to pandemic
  • 67% using it exclusively
  • Increased patient satisfaction

• Limitations
  • Difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues
  • Billing challenges
  • Less suitable for severe behavioral health disorders or older patients
THE FUTURE

Telebehavioral health increased access in rural areas but is not a panacea.

• Workforce shortages
• Policy flexibilities will mostly end with the public health emergency
• Government action required to make changes permanent
• CMS guidance for post-pandemic Medicaid
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS
CORNERSTONE WHOLE HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

Greater Rural Idaho Telehealth Team Expansion Project

Links integrated and specialty behavioral health providers to primary care patients through the Telehealth Idaho Independent Provider Integration Network

Partnership providers in southeast Kansas focus on unmet pediatric, behavioral health needs through direct-to-consumer (DTC) telebehavioral health and community health workers.

More information on University of Kansas Medical Center [https://www.kumc.edu/](https://www.kumc.edu/)
This partnership with North Carolina Statewide Tele-Psychiatry is expanding the statewide psychiatry network to bring telehealth-enabled behavioral health counseling and care management into rural emergency departments.

More information on Brody School of Medicine [https://medicine.ecu.edu/](https://medicine.ecu.edu/)
The partnership with the Healthy Granite County Network, an existing community coalition and behavioral health network in Nevada, is enhancing capacity by delivering 24-hour emergency department crises and consultation services via telehealth to rural providers without emergency care specialists.

More information on Intermountain Healthcare https://intermountainhealthcare.org/
RESOURCES
TELEBEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

• Telebehavioral Health Codes and Services - https://telehealthresourcecenter.org/resources/fact-sheets/telebehavioral-health-codes-and-services/

• SAMHSA Telehealth for the Treatment of Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders - https://store.samhsa.gov/product/telehealth-for-treatment-serious-mental-illness-substance-use-disorders/PEP21-06-02-001

• HHS Best practice guide Telehealth for behavioral health care - https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/telehealth-for-behavioral-health/


TELEBEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

• APA Telepsychiatry Toolkit - https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/telepsychiatry/toolkit

• Telehealth Clinical and Technical Considerations for Mental Health Providers - https://cars-rp.org/_MHTTC/docs/Telehealth%20Clinical%20Considerations.pdf

• RHI Hub Telehealth Models for Increasing Access to Behavioral and Mental Health Treatment - https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/telehealth/2/specific-populations/behavioral-health


THANK YOU!

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