

CASE STUDY:

Rural Behavioral Health Hospital on the Brink of Closing Turns to Access TeleCare to Continue Providing Psychiatric Care



Challenge

A stand-alone, rural behavioral health hospital faced the threat of closure after the individual serving as both medical director and psychiatrist announced their retirement. The 64-bed facility operates adult and geriatric units as well as a 10-bed psychiatric intensive care unit for individuals who are actively suicidal and need close monitoring. With the announced retirement, it had just 90 days to recruit a qualified Psychiatric Medical Director to the facility – a next to impossible task. Without a suitable replacement, the hospital would be forced to close.

Solution

The hospital partnered with Access TeleCare to launch a fully virtual behavioral health care telemedicine program. The program equipped the hospital with a Psychiatric Medical Director and a full team of psychiatrists and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) via telemedicine. While most telemedicine programs of this scale take six to nine months to implement, Access TeleCare launched this program in less than three months to ensure the hospital maintained full coverage without service interruption as soon as the retiring physician left.

“Access TeleCare kept us open, and for that we will always be very grateful.”

– Hospital Leader

The team of experienced and highly skilled virtual behavioral health professionals handle all psychiatric care, including admissions, daily rounding, PICU consultations, and year-round 24/7 on-call coverage. Through a collaborative “hands-on” approach that emphasizes clear, open, and consistent communication, Access TeleCare built a high level of trust and quickly established a fully virtual model of care that works for on-site care teams and patients.

Keys to Program Success

Regular weekly meetings before, during, and after launching the program enabled Access TeleCare to quickly develop a strong rapport with on-site teams as the entire hospital adjusted to delivering fully virtual behavioral health care. “We feel like we are their only client,” one hospital leader said.

The flexibility of telemedicine and the Access TeleCare team’s commitment to meeting the hospital’s unique goals and needs greatly contributed to the program’s early and sustained success. Access TeleCare providers conducted staff training sessions at the most convenient time for both the day and night shift on-site team members. Access TeleCare’s specialists also trained the on-site medical staff members on how to interact with its providers virtually, ensuring a seamless transition to virtual care delivery. The hospital continues to deploy a highly successful and 100 percent virtual behavioral health program.

Program Benefits



Increased census by **31%**



Seamless **3-month** implementation



Continuity of care: The hospital achieved full coverage for the adult, geriatric, and PICU units, with no gaps when the physician retired.



Collaboration and training: Improved behavioral health care capabilities, support, and education opportunities for on-site nurses.



Improved patient care experience: Patients quickly embraced a fully virtual care experience.



“This is the wave of the future and we’re there! I can’t imagine that we would ever go back to on-site psychiatry.”

– Hospital Leader

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