Innovation Report

Washington Association for Community Health
Community Health Centers Advancing Quality Care for All

Community Health of Central Washington

Primary Care Behavioral Health Model in Practice

Community Health of Central Washington's (CHCW) implementation of the Primary Care Behavioral Health (PCBH) model demonstrates how integrated behavioral health can be successfully embedded into primary care delivery. These success factors contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of CHCW's model:



1. Behavioral Health as a Core Primary Care Service
At CHCW, Behavioral Health Consultants (BHCs) are treated as essential members of the care team. They are embedded in clinic workflows, work alongside primary care providers, and are reliably available to patients. This encourages system-wide engagement and results in high utilization across teams.

2. Organizational Alignment
The PCBH program's goals and data are intentionally aligned with those of the organization. This alignment ensures buy-in from leadership and positions behavioral health as a core contributor to quality, access, and financial performance - not a standalone program.

3. Operational Integration
The program operates with a lean leadership structure, led by two directors and one manager, and uses existing organizational infrastructure for support.

4. In-the-Moment Patient Support
Approximately 35–40% of visits occur on the same day a need is identified. BHCs deliver immediate, billable interventions which improves access, maintains high patient satisfaction, and contributes to financial sustainability. Over 25% of medical patients also are seeing a BHC, thus the program achieves high population reach.

5. Workforce Development and Retention
Education is a core part of CHCW's mission. BHCs are able to train the next generation of clinicians, contributing to high engagement and a strong internal pipeline. For six years, the PCBH programs have had the highest employee engagement out of any department.

6. Medical Provider Satisfaction
Annual surveys show that primary care providers value BHC support, noting improved clinical care and workload reduction. Integrated behavioral health is viewed as an asset in recruiting and retaining PCPs.

CHCW's model demonstrates that behavioral health integration can enhance access, improve clinical and financial outcomes, and strengthen both provider and patient experiences when fully embedded in primary care.

To learn more about CHCW's Behavioral Health Model, read the full report.

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