

Background

A 183-bed facility serving both urban and rural populations, faced growing demand for behavioral health services. Long wait times for psychiatrists, coupled with limited inpatient psychiatric unit coverage, led to prolonged ED boarding, patient dissatisfaction, and staff burnout.

The Challenge

- 1. ED Psychiatric Boarding:** Behavioral health patients were often held in the ED for 24–48 hours awaiting psychiatric evaluation.
- 2. Limited Coverage:** Adult psychiatry services were only available during business hours, with no pediatric psychiatry coverage at all.
- 3. Staff Strain:** ED physicians and nurses were stretched beyond capacity managing psychiatric crises without specialized support.
- 4. Compliance Risks:** Delays in psychiatric evaluations threatened the hospital's ability to meet CMS and Joint Commission quality standards, and volatile patients posed safety risks to themselves and hospital staff.

The STeM Solution: All-Ages TelePsychiatry

The hospital partnered with **Specialist TeleMed (STeM)** to launch a **TelePsychiatry program** designed to deliver timely psychiatric care for both adults and children.

Key Features of the Program:

- **24/7 Adult & Pediatric Psychiatric Coverage** for ED and inpatient units.
- **Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) Support:** STeM's psychiatrists conducted daily rounds, including med management and nurse calls.
- **Dedicated POD of Seven Psychiatrists:** A consistent group of clinicians built familiarity with the hospital's staff, workflows, and EMR.
- **Comprehensive Documentation:** Seamless integration into the EMR for regulatory compliance and continuity of care.

Results

After the first year, the hospital reported impressive results from STeM's All-Ages TelePsychiatry program, including:

- **Reduced ED Boarding:** Average psychiatric boarding times decreased from 36 hours to under 8 hours.

- **Expanded Access:** Pediatric patients received timely evaluations, previously unavailable, improving family satisfaction and outcomes.
- **Staff Satisfaction:** ED physicians and nurses reported reduced stress and higher confidence in managing psychiatric patients with on-demand specialist support.
- **Improved Patient Outcomes:** Earlier interventions led to faster stabilization, fewer admissions, and shorter inpatient stays.
- **Behavioral Health Unit Stability:** With consistent rounding coverage, patient flow improved, and compliance metrics were met consistently.

Hospital Testimonial

“STeM’s TelePsychiatry program has been transformative. Our ED runs more smoothly, our patients receive faster, higher-quality psychiatric care, and our staff feel supported knowing they have immediate access to psychiatrists for adults *and* children.”

— Chief Nursing Officer

Why STeM

- **Dedicated POD Model:** Staff work with a small, consistent group of psychiatrists, ensuring familiarity and trust.
- **Comprehensive Coverage:** ED, inpatient, and BHU services, including both adult and pediatric psychiatry.
- **Proven Outcomes:** Measurable reductions in ED boarding times and improved regulatory compliance.
- **Flexible Models:** Tech-agnostic solutions integrated into existing EMRs and hospital workflows.

Conclusion

By partnering with STeM, the hospital transformed its behavioral health services, reducing ED psychiatric boarding, expanding pediatric access, and improving staff and patient satisfaction. STeM’s TelePsychiatry program proved not only clinically effective but also operationally and financially beneficial.

Contact Specialist TeleMed to learn how our All-Ages TelePsychiatry program can improve outcomes and increase access to care for your patients.