

Getting Started with Behavioral Health Integration

Making the Case: Why Behavioral Health Integration Matters

Behavioral health integration is a model of care that has many benefits and encourages higher levels of patient care. These benefits include:

- *Improved patient outcomes and experience:* Timely screening and follow-up catch symptoms early and connect patients to effective care sooner. Less fragmentation of care.
- *Supports whole-person care:* Integrating behavioral health into primary care addresses mental and physical health together, increasing effectiveness and efficiencies.
- *Increased equity:* Systematic screening and follow-up help ensure all patients, especially underserved populations, receive consistent support.
- *Enhanced team coordination:* Clear workflows and shared data foster collaboration, consultation, and coordination between primary care and behavioral health providers.
- *Optimized resource use:* Integration reduces duplicative efforts, lowers barriers, and supports population health goals.

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The following steps are recommendations for building an integrated behavioral health program and are designed to help teams meaningfully advance population health work through enhancing behavioral health integration:

- **Bolster Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration ("Teamness").** Both behavioral health and medical staff are crucial to this conversation and success for integrated care.
- **Map the Current Process.** Uncover your current process from screening to follow-up— who does what, when? You can start with a high-level process map or, for going deeper, understand the process for adult versus children, during telehealth visits or outside of business hours, for warm handoffs, or from the patient perspective.
- **Reflect on Behavioral Health Performance Metrics.** Look at your Practice's HEDIS and UDS measures to see what's working and what needs attention.

PHM INITIATIVE

- **Identify and Prioritize Actionable Change Ideas.** Work with your team to identify and prioritize changes to move work forward.
- **Test Changes Using PDSA Cycles.** [An example PDSA cycle](#) for behavioral health integration provided by PHMI outlines how a PDSA can be utilized for behavioral health integration and follow-ups.
- **Implement Successful Changes into Standard Work.** Plan how to keep the changes that worked and make them part of your regular workflows, procedures and monitoring.

For additional considerations see the PHMI Behavioral Health Guide [Key Activity 2: Enhance the Culture of Integrated Behavioral Health](#) and [Key Activity 3: Enhance Operational Integration of Behavioral Health](#).

Resources:

[Integrated Behavioral Health and Primary Care: Terms to Know](#)

This resource, developed by The Academy Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care develops shared terminology of behavioral health integration and building blocks of what is needed to achieve integrated care.