

Rawlins County Health Center Adds Telebehavioral Health in January

New Outpatient Telebehavioral Health Services Complement Rural Primary Care

Atwood, KS – January 14, 2020 – Rawlins County Health Center is excited to announce the addition of telebehavioral health in its specialty clinic. It started January 9, 2020. Rawlins County Health Center is one of 10 sites in The University of Kansas Health System's Care Collaborative that is participating in an outpatient telebehavioral health network to further support rural primary care needs by extending scarce specialty resources across Kansas.

"The benefits of having telebehavioral health services at Rawlins County Health Center are numerous," Jennifer Hurst, clinic operations director said. Hurst stated, "We know from the community's input on the Community Health Needs Assessments that behavioral health is a top priority impacting our county and communities. We must move forward collaboratively to address this growing need to improve the quality of life of our friends and families."

Charity Wright, PA-C, stated, "Telebehavioral health gives rural Americans a means to conveniently access psychologists not typically locally available. Patients frequently are unable to drive the distances required to receive their services face-to-face on a consistent, ongoing basis".

Mental health is a significant issue and the limited availability of specialists, lengthy distances, and weather makes it hard to get to and keep appointments. Having a dedicated psychologist available via telebehavioral health without travel for the patient or psychologist is a huge benefit.

Kyle Herspring, PA-C, added, "Telebehavioral health is a great way for Rawlins County Health Center to provide trained professionals from The University of Kansas Hospital in Kansas City, more than six hours away by car, to our patients without requiring time-consuming and costly travel. It provides our patients and healthcare team greater continuity of care."

Jason Kearns, PA-C, added that a main benefit for Rawlins Clinic and its primary care providers is this enhanced coordination. The clinic providers will work with the psychologist to determine the best treatment for a patient.

"We already work in collaboration with UKHS on several other initiatives including stroke, sepsis, and heart attacks," Kearns said. "I believe the Telebehavioral Health Network will be of great value to patients at Rawlins County Health Center. It allows us to expand access for behavioral and mental health and integrates it as part of their primary medical care."

Jose Renteria, ACNP, added, "This is a great resource to have available and many of our patients will benefit."

Robert Moser, MD, medical director of the Care Collaborative, stated, "Our members understand the impact behavioral health has on chronic medical conditions and the challenges of provider and patient engagement in this care."

Using telebehavioral health best practices and secure video conferencing solutions, the licensed clinical psychologists can assess and treat a range of behavioral concerns in patients, such as coping with depression and anxiety symptoms associated with a chronic illness, grief with the loss of a loved one, and life-threatening diagnoses, as examples. Broader behavioral health services may include healthy lifestyle interventions, support with complex medical regimens, pain management and help with substance use disorders. Services for emergent, crisis situations and high-acuity, severe, persistent mental illness are outside of the scope of these services, but individuals with these needs would still be referred as necessary to an appropriate mental health center.

The outpatient telebehavioral health network was made possible by a 3-year award from the Health Resources and Services Administration, and Hurst said Rawlins County Health Center and Rawlins Clinic are proud to be part of the program and thankful to The University of Kansas Health System for the opportunity.

To take part in telebehavioral health, patients must see their primary care provider at Rawlins Clinic first so that the provider can refer the patient for these services. Then an appointment can be scheduled with the psychologist. Adult behavioral health care is the initial focus of this grant-funded project.

Most insurances cover telebehavioral health.

For more information, contact Jennifer at Rawlins Clinic at 785-626-3241.

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