

behavioral telehealth visits

the pandemic has brought many positive changes

By Megan Quinn, LCSW

As Behavioral Health Manager at the Community Health Center of Buffalo, many of the patients I see often have questions regarding seeing me virtually, rather than in person. Fortunately, and nearly overwhelmingly, my patients have been delighted to receive telehealth services in the comfort of their own homes. In fact, they tell me there is literally no difference, other than having made their lives easier.

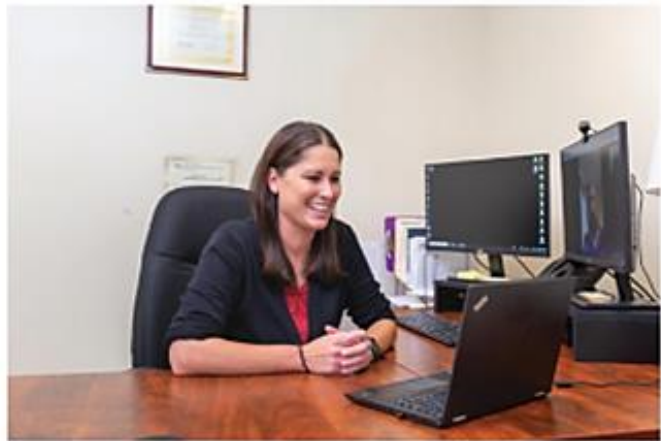
As more people who are considering telehealth services ask what the experience is like, I decided to answer some questions.

What kind of telehealth services can people receive and what does it entail? When COVID started, many patients did not feel comfortable seeing me in person. As a result, we implemented a high-quality virtual platform specifically for behavioral health patients. The platform allows our patients to see and be seen by me, regardless of the equipment they have at home. They do not have to download or purchase anything. My patient simply receives a text message from me inviting them to come to and confirm their virtual appointment. They then wait in a waiting room until I admit them shortly after they enter.

Can the patient do this on a smartphone? Yes. I ask patients if they prefer to receive an email from me on their computer or laptop, or a text message if they just want to meet using their phone.

I have never done a virtual behavioral health visit. What can I expect? There is little difference between a virtual and in-person visit because we can still see one another's faces. Typically, with a new patient, the meeting follows the same protocol and format as an in-person visit. We start with an initial assessment that includes a review of social and family history, and a drug, alcohol, depression, and anxiety assessment.

What are some of the advantages of a behavioral health telehealth visit? The biggest advantage is being able to do it from home! As with in-person visits, I make every effort to establish a rapport with my patients. Patients appreciate this option and say it is helping them to overcome barriers, such as the need for transportation and childcare. Most patients tell us that they are able to complete a session while their child is napping, playing safely in another room, at grandma's house, or at school.



Megan Quinn is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and has served as the Behavioral Health Manager at the Community Health Center of Buffalo since 2015. Megan is a graduate of Gannon University, Erie, PA, where she majored in Psychology. Megan also holds certifications in trauma-informed care counseling, leadership development, life space crisis and therapeutic crisis intervention, and suicide prevention, assessment, and response. She sees patients via telehealth visits, as well as in person two days a week at 34 Benwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY. She can be reached at 716-986-9199, ext. 5105 for an appointment or at mquinn@chcb.net.

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