



ValueOptions® Leverages Telehealth Solution to Help Improve Care and Access for Patients

The promise of communications technology, from the phone to the Internet, has always been to bring people closer together, resulting in benefits to individuals, businesses, and public and private organizations around the world.

But there is one area where it has yet to make a significant impact: psychiatric medical consultation and treatment. Until now.

What's making the difference today? A pilot project by ValueOptions®, an independent behavioral health and wellness company, David Lawrence Center, a MH/SA provider, and Verizon. The project is proving that communications technology can bring doctors and patients together virtually to increase accessibility, improve care, and reduce costs.

ValueOptions® provides health services to more than 23 million individuals through a variety of contracts with state and county agencies, health plans and employers. ValueOptions® specializes in management for all behavioral health issues and promotes health and wellness through innovative programs.

Successful Pilot

For the pilot, ValueOptions® partnered with the David Lawrence Center, a Collier County community-based mental health center with offices in Naples and Immokalee, Florida. Verizon Telehealth Collaboration Services, utilizing high-definition video conferencing units and IP-based networking, enabled the delivery of tele-psychiatry from the David Lawrence Center to residents of Immokalee, Fla., a remote community tucked in the headwaters of the Everglades.

Immokalee, in Collier County on the west coast of Florida, is a rural agricultural community 30 miles east of Naples. Nearly half the residents of this largely migrant population live below the poverty line and many face daily struggles accessing adequate health care. Compounding the problem is the fact that specialists and psychiatrists tend to gravitate to urban areas. "There has been a shortage of physicians choosing psychiatry in recent years and a lot are retiring," says GERALYN POLETTI, Director of Community and Satellite Services at the David Lawrence Center.

The answer—to bring the psychiatric evaluations to them virtually—requires superior communications technology performance. A doctor typically needs to "see" the patient. Read body language. See facial expressions. Catch the nuances in voice. Replication of the in-person experience is the key factor. "When you are seeing someone for mental health service, it is very critical for it to be as close to a real face-to-face visit as possible. There can be no lag in sound or picture quality," says Dr. J. David Moore, M.D., DLFAPA, Medical Director, ValueOptions® Tampa Regional Service Center.

ValueOptions® and David Lawrence Center Tele-Psychiatry Solution

Challenge

Extend psychiatric care to remote areas

Solution

High-definition video conferencing

Business Value

- Better use of limited physician resources
- Access to care for rural and remote patients
- Improved care and prevention
- Control costs



The Verizon Telehealth solution passes the test, from the “plug and play” installation, to training by solution partner Tandberg. Shortly after implementation, The David Lawrence Center received dramatic evidence of the solution’s effectiveness. During a virtual consultation, the attending physician was able to pick up both verbal and non-verbal cues of a patient at risk of a harmful breakdown. The doctor was able to immediately effect an intervention through the proper channels and have the patient admitted to a hospital for treatment, a potentially life saving event.

The Results That Matter—Improving Care

It’s easy to see why ValueOptions® Vice President of Project Management Matt Grenier says, “We believe tele-psychiatry to be a big deal regarding access issues for folks in rural areas.” Clients now have access to doctors four days a week rather than twice a month. Caregivers can deliver better care more quickly and with less costs. For example, by resolving access issues to rural areas, patients will be more likely to receive the care they need, when they need it, resulting in more preventative and efficient treatment. And they will be less likely to resort to more costly emergency department visits and hospital in-patient care.

The anecdotal evidence of success is backed up by the numbers: for a 14-week period from June 28 to October 1, 2010, the service had a 62 percent increase of care delivery to clients over the same period the previous year. That equates to a jump from serving 95 clients and providing 645 services during the June to October timeframe in 2009, to 157 clients served and 1,223 services provided during the same period in 2010.

Building On Success

“We have been thrilled with results at the David Lawrence Center and are looking to expand in other areas with tele-psychiatry” says Grenier. With the advent of 4G wireless technology, ValueOptions® is eager to explore a mobile solution in which case managers meet members in homes, community centers, and other locations. And with the success of their pilot program under their belts, ValueOptions® is proving that with the right communications technology and expertise, barriers to access will continue to fall and quality of care will continue to rise.

About Verizon Business

Verizon Business, a unit of Verizon Communications (NYSE: VZ), is a global leader in communications and IT solutions. We combine professional expertise with one of the world’s most connected IP networks to deliver award-winning communications, IT, information security and network solutions. We securely connect today’s extended enterprises of widespread and mobile customers, partners, suppliers and employees—enabling them to increase productivity and efficiency and help preserve the environment. Many of the world’s largest businesses and governments—including 96 percent of the Fortune 1000 and thousands of government agencies and educational institutions—rely on our professional and managed services and network technologies to accelerate their business. Find out more at www.verizonbusiness.com.

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