



## Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital Improves Acute Behavioral Health Access and Response Time With Telepsychiatry

### Problem

At Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital in Florida, behavioral health consults in the ED had become a major pain point. The hospital's staff psychiatrists cared for both inpatient and emergency department (ED) behavioral health patients. The problem with this model was that the inpatient hospital and ED were not located on the same campus, requiring psychiatrists to walk outside and cross the street to get to the ED. This resulted in ED consults being delayed until the end of the day. Rather than wait for a consult, ED staff would frequently discharge patients or refer them for intensive treatment programs or partial hospitalization instead of a less-acute care setting. This led to poor outcomes and higher costs, and also resulted in frustrated psychiatrists, which caused high turnover.

### Solution

Indian River Hospital partnered with Aligned Telehealth, a division of Amwell, to provide virtual acute psychiatry consults. The hospital began with telepsychiatry for after-hours use in the ED in December 2018 and by February 2019 expanded to 24/7 availability in the ED and on medical floors. In January 2020, the hospital expanded the program to cover the Cleveland Clinic's four other Florida hospitals, which do not have on-site psychiatrists.

### Results

Once the telepsychiatry program was in place, the average response time for a behavioral health consult at Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital dropped dramatically — from more than 24 hours to less than 40 minutes on the medical floors and less than 30 minutes in the ED. The average time to transfer out of the ED — which is as high as 3 to 4 days at other Florida hospitals — has also decreased, to less than 4 hours. From January 2019 to December 2019, the hospital saw the number of virtual consults double, and is now averaging more than 220 telepsychiatry consults per month. Turnover rates among staff psychiatrists, who can now focus solely on inpatient care, have also dramatically improved.

Decreased ED psychiatry consult time for 24 hours to less than

**30 min**

**2X**

Increase in telepsychiatry consults from January to December 2019

**220+**

Telepsychiatry consults per month

## Problem: Delayed Behavioral Health Consults Had Many Downstream Impacts

At Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital, the emergency department (ED) and the inpatient behavioral health center are not in the same building. When the ED or a medical floor requested a behavioral health consult, a psychiatrist had to leave the inpatient floor and walk across the street to conduct an in-person consult in the ED.

The short distance between buildings proved to be major barrier to delivering timely care. The consults disrupted the psychiatrists' schedules, and since the orders had a 24-hour window in which to be filled, psychiatrists often saved these consults for the end of their shifts. This led to long waits for patients as well as for ED staff — who, as a result, were ordering very few consults.

According to Anne W. Posey, LMHC, NCC, Assistant Administrator of Behavioral Health at Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital, the kinks in the consult process caused numerous downstream consequences, including:

- Increased use of sitters to remain with patients with behavioral health needs
- Lengthy transfer delays and multiple phone calls to manage transfers and admissions
- Discharges from the behavioral health center less than 24 hours after admission because patients didn't meet involuntary hold criteria
- Unnecessary referrals to high-acuity settings

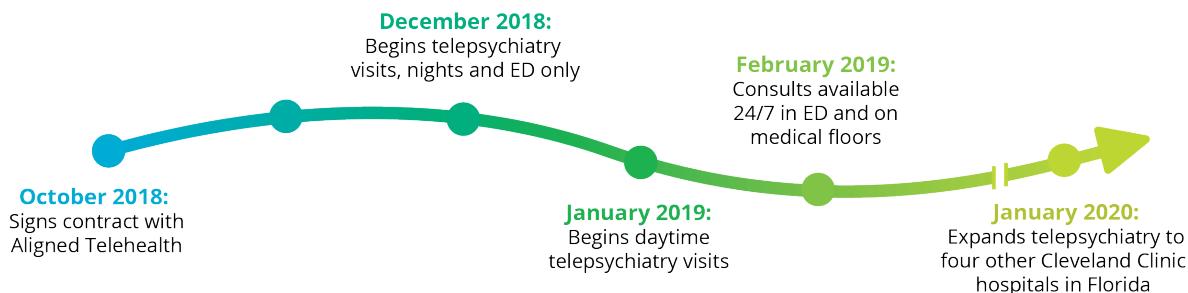
"I had a lot of unhappy psychiatrists. The consult and liaison role wasn't what they really wanted to do. It disrupted their day," Posey says. "We had seen a great deal of turnover in our psychiatrists because of that."

### Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital: At a Glance



Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital is a 332-bed facility located in Vero Beach, Florida. The nonprofit hospital opened in 1932 and became part of the Cleveland Clinic system in 2018. The hospital consists of a main campus as well as several ambulatory care locations, including a 46-bed inpatient behavioral health hospital. Indian River Hospital is one of five Cleveland Clinic hospitals located in Florida and the only one with an on-site behavioral health center.

## Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital Telepsychiatry Timeline



## Solution: Better Patient Care through a Telepsychiatry Program

Indian River Hospital partnered with Aligned Telehealth to implement a telepsychiatry program. The goal of the program was to enable ED and medical floor clinicians to conduct remote behavioral health consults (using wheeled carts equipped with two-way video) with Aligned Telehealth's psychiatrists, who are board-certified, fully credentialed, and licensed to practice in Florida. This would enable the health system's inpatient psychiatrists to focus solely on providing care in the behavioral health center.

While there was some initial skepticism about the use of telehealth, Posey and her team used two techniques to ease the concerns of staff and encourage adoption:

**Training.** With teams spread across the ED and medical floors working various shifts, Posey made sure to schedule multiple information sessions. "We went to huddles, we went to all the floors on all the shifts, we presented to the physician groups, and we did some on-the-fly training and support," she recalls. "We also identified a technology champion who acted as a troubleshooter when people had questions. If you're looking to integrate this type of service into your hospital, that's something to take into account."

**Building trust.** Many physicians said they preferred that psychiatrists assess a patient in person. Posey addressed this in two ways: first, by highlighting the qualifications of Aligned Telehealth's staff psychiatrists, and second, by hosting virtual and in-person meet-and-greet sessions with department leaders and Aligned Telehealth. "We were making sure that our staff had a way to call up the chain and talk with someone if they had concerns," Posey said. "We found that once staff experienced a couple of telepsychiatry visits, they became very comfortable with the service."

### An Improved Experience for Clinical Staff

"Our inpatient psychiatrists are much happier — they're able to plan their day, and they're more available to their patients. In addition, since our telepsychiatrists can write or lift involuntary hold orders directly in a patient's chart, that relieves the burden and risk from our ED physicians, which makes them extremely happy. The program has also been very helpful for the hospitalists who see the patients on the medical floor. They can come in the morning and get their day started, order consults, and have them done first thing in the morning. Then patients can get transferred where they need to go or receive the medication they need."



Anne W. Posey, LMHC, NCC, Assistant Administrator, Behavioral Health,  
Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital

## Result: More Consults, Faster Consults — and Telepsychiatry Expansion

Within three months, Indian River Hospital expanded its use of telepsychiatry from nighttime hours in the ED to 24/7 coverage in the ED and on the medical floors. The number of behavioral health consults rose immediately and continued to climb — from an average of 15 in-person consults per month to more than 75 virtual consults in January 2019 and nearly 250 in December 2019. The response time for consults has dropped dramatically as well, from 24 hours or more to under 30 minutes for patients in the ED and under 40 minutes for patients on the medical floors — well below the hospital's goal time of 60 minutes. Transfers out of the ED now happen in less than four hours.

Indian River Hospital's success with telepsychiatry led the hospital to expand its service in January 2020 to the Cleveland Clinic's four other Florida hospitals, which do not have on-site behavioral health centers.

"I really am very proud of what we've done with telepsychiatry, and working with Aligned Telehealth has been quite the partnership to be able to get this off the ground effectively," Posey said. "This has been a great value-add for us."

