

THE COLLABORATIVE CARE MODEL: Delivering Quality Mental Health Care in the Pediatric Care Setting

What is Collaborative Care?

The Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) brings together physical and mental health care treatment within a pediatrician's office. In this integrated care approach, a pediatrician, a psychiatric consultant, and behavioral health care manager work together to detect and provide established treatments for common mental health problems, measure patients' progress toward treatment targets, and adjust care when appropriate. CoCM is a data-driven, patient-centered approach that multiplies the expertise of scarce mental health clinicians through task sharing, technology, structured teamwork, and telehealth.

Evidence Supporting CoCM

CoCM is extensively supported by scientific studies, with over 90 randomized controlled trials demonstrating its clinical efficacy. Providers use the model to help people with depression, anxiety, and other common mental health problems. The Meadows Institute has studied the impact that universal access to CoCM would have on suicide rates, and the data are clear and encouraging: If every American with depression had access to CoCM, between 9,000 and 14,500 lives could be saved every year.¹

CoCM Financing

CoCM is currently the only integrated mental health model reimbursed in primary care with dedicated billing codes. Covered by Medicare since 2017, by nearly all commercial payers since 2019, and a growing number of Medicaid programs, CoCM has a clear pathway for long-term financial sustainability and increases treatment access for patients. A 2013 study found that CoCM was associated with a 6:1 return on investment, meaning that every dollar spent led to \$6 in overall cost-of-care savings.² If only 20% of people with depression had access to CoCM, an estimated \$15 billion per year could be saved in total Medicaid spending.³

1 <https://mmhpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-MHSUDPrevention.pdf>

2 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18269305/>

3 <https://www.milliman.com/-/media/milliman/importedfiles/uploadedfiles/insight/2018/>

HOW IT WORKS

The Collaborative Care team is led by a pediatrician and includes behavioral health care managers, psychiatric consultants and other mental health professionals all empowered to work together. The team implements a measurement-focused care plan based on evidence-based practice guidelines and focuses particular attention on patients struggling to meet clinical goals.

