

TEXAS A&M COLLABORATIVE CARE (COCM) IMPLEMENTATION CASE STUDY

January 2025

MEADOWS
MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY INSTITUTE

SUMMARY

With technical assistance support from the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI), Texas A&M University Health Services (UHS) implemented the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) to integrate mental health care within primary care delivered through their student health clinic. These efforts have improved access to cost-effective care for over 77,000 students. Texas A&M is one of the first universities nationally to implement CoCM through their student health clinic as a service to their student population.

Regional Details¹

Location: College Station, Texas, USA

Local Population: Approximately 124,000

Surrounding Region: Brazos County, Texas with a population of approximately 242,000

Proximity to Major Population Centers:

Houston, TX: 95 miles (approximately 1.5 hours by car)

Austin, TX: 107 miles (approximately 2 hours by car)

Site Details

Texas A&M UHS is the on-campus health care provider for students attending Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. University enrollment in 2023 included 77,491 students (60,729 undergraduates, 16,762 graduate students). All enrolled students are eligible to be seen by UHS after they pay the student health center fee and university advancement fee for the corresponding semester.

- Physicians: 8
- Advanced Practice Providers: 17
- Treatment Population: students aged 16-75
- Payers Reimbursing for CoCM: Texas A&M is contracted with Academic Health Plans through Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS). Other payers are out of network.

DISPARITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS: LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL PROVIDER-TO- PATIENT RATIOS



1 to 780
in Brazos County



1 to 690
in Texas



1 to 340
in the United States

The motivation driving CoCM implementation at Texas A&M UHS was to, “improve the quality of the integrated behavioral health services in a high-volume university primary care clinic.”

Dr. Nancy Fahrenwald
Associate Vice President
for University Health Services

¹County health rankings & roadmaps (2023). Mental health providers. County health rankings. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/health-factors/clinical-care/access-to-care/mental-health-providers?year=2023&county=48041>

COLLABORATIVE CARE PROGRAM

Technical Assistance and Vendor Support

Over the course of a year, MMHPI unilaterally supported Texas A&M UHS by providing targeted technical assistance (TA) to ensure the successful implementation of a full-fidelity CoCM program. MMHPI led bi-weekly workflow meetings, fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, and conducted an in-person training in College Station to engage the primary care, information technology (IT), finance, behavioral health care manager (BHCM), and psychiatric consultant teams. The training featured a live demonstration of the CoCM workflow, with interactive audience participation, and a robust Q&A session to address practical concerns. Additionally, MMHPI's TA team conducted real-time analyses of EHR barriers, offering actionable solutions to align IT strategy with clinical needs and secure the program's long-term success after the TA period concluded.

Texas A&M UHS did not receive CoCM vendor support. The site employs primary care providers (PCPs) and a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner who received CoCM training from MMHPI. UHS also hired and trained a new BHCM and built a patient registry within their electronic health record (EHR), Point and Click (PNC).

Workflow

Students receiving in-person physical or mental health services at UHS are screened with a Patient Health Questionnaire 2 (PHQ-2) during their first visit, annually. If the PHQ-2 is positive, they receive a PHQ-9 screening to further evaluate symptoms of depression. If the student meets inclusion criteria, the PCP introduces the CoCM program and offers enrollment. Students with needs outside the scope of the program are referred to specialty care through the university counseling center. After the student verbally consents, the PCP submits a referral to the BHCM in the EHR. The BHCM reaches out to the patient through the patient portal to schedule an in-person or virtual intake appointment. The BHCM and psychiatric consultant meet weekly to review the patient registry, prioritizing new patients and those who have not yet demonstrated clinical improvement. During these weekly case review meetings, the psychiatric consultant suggests treatment plan recommendations (which may include medications and/or brief therapeutic interventions) as indicated. The BHCM follows up with the patient at least every 10 days, depending on clinical presentation.

Billing

CoCM service minutes are tracked manually by the BHCM on a HIPAA-compliant Excel Registry. Within four business days following the end of the calendar month, the BHCM sends a copy of the registry to the billing department. The registry is used to track the patient's progress and determine the CoCM codes that can be billed. CoCM services are billed on or after the fifth business day following the month's end. If the student is not covered through Academic Health Plans BCBS or does not have other out of network coverage, the balance is transferred to the patient. Financial constraints can pose a significant barrier for students in need of mental health services. To make CoCM accessible, students with Academic Health Plans BCBS coverage are only responsible for a fee of \$25 per month when enrolled in CoCM, regardless of total minutes billed. The PCP explains patient cost-sharing to the student at the same time they obtain consent.

Conclusion

Texas A&M University Health Services has successfully implemented CoCM as an innovative approach to addressing the mental health needs of its student population. Through their full-fidelity CoCM program, UHS has enhanced the accessibility and quality of mental health care on campus. Despite financial barriers and reliance on a single contracted payer, the program has improved care coordination and patient outcomes. As one of the first university health clinics to adopt CoCM, UHS sets a valuable precedent for similar institutions seeking to expand integrated care services.

For information on Collaborative Care technical assistance and implementation visit mmhpi.org/cocm.

“We have found Collaborative Care to be an effective way to coordinate care management, psychiatric expertise, counseling, and primary care into a seamless delivery system for the patients we serve.”

Dr. Tiffany Skaggs

*Senior Director of Primary Care
and Specialty Medical Care*

AFFORDABLE MENTAL HEALTH CARE AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Students with Academic Health
Plans BCBS coverage are
responsible for a fee of

**\$25 PER
MONTH WHEN
ENROLLED
IN COCM,**

**regardless of total minutes spent
delivering Collaborative Care.**