

Dramatically Reducing Behavioral Health Care Gaps

Case Study: Large Nonprofit Healthcare System

How it Works

- Rula automated the referral process, integrating best-practice advisory alerts into the client's electronic health record (aka EHR) system.
- Rula rolled out its platform over four months, collaborating with the health system on technical workflows during implementation.
- A nimble and flexible approach ensured that its platform aligned with the client's EHR system and processes.
- The healthcare system made referrals by manually sending patient information to Rula, which would follow up and connect with patients by email and text to enroll and schedule.
- Rula used a secure e-fax system to send patient notes to the health system, which uploaded them to its EHR, and advised PCPs when records were ready for review.

- 2,300 patients in a large nonprofit healthcare system received care through Rula over a four-year period
- 40% of referred patients scheduled appointments
- 90% of patients returned for a second appointment with their initial provider
- Roughly half of patients experiencing depression saw clinically meaningful improvement in 10 sessions

The Challenge

In 2020, a leading nonprofit healthcare system in Southern California faced a growing wave of patients needing behavioral health care amid the enormous stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, primary care physicians (PCPs) referred all patients to an internal department. But the group did not offer psychiatric care or medication management, and found itself quickly overwhelmed by both the number of patients and the complexity of their needs.

The health system wanted an external partner to help it dramatically reduce care gaps for its patient population.

The Approach

Leadership established an internal collaborative care team to treat managed care patients, and engaged Rula to provide behavioral health overflow support for fee-for-service patients. The health plan chose Rula because its thousands of providers offered more than 90 clinical specialties, accepted a wide range of insurance plans, and used industry-recognized measures to track clinical outcomes.

The healthcare system also liked Rula's systematic reporting—both from providers to PCPs, so they knew how their patients were doing—as well as the high-level view provided by quarterly reporting of aggregated clinical outcomes.



The Outcome

Between 2020 and 2024, 2,300 therapy and psychology patients found behavioral healthcare treatment through Rula, and about 90% returned for a second appointment with their initial provider.

Clinical improvements have been significant and satisfaction scores are consistently high, with patients citing the ease of finding a therapist and making an appointment, and lauding the high quality of the providers. For example, 1Q 2024 data showed:

- In 10 sessions, nearly 48% of patients experiencing depression improved, as measured by GAD-7.
- In 10 sessions, 39% of patients with anxiety made progress as measured by the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) assessment.
- 91.2% of patients agreed that they were “working together with my provider on mutual goals and treatment,” felt understood by the provider, and confident in the provider's ability to help.

Nationally, Rula's network includes 18,000+ licensed providers, representing more than 90 clinical specialties and modalities, 40 languages, 18 faiths and religions, and a wide range of backgrounds. Nearly half of the therapists in the network are Black, indigenous, or people of color. Some 97% of searches for a therapist result in an exact match. Therapists on the Rula platform are fully licensed, and undergo a thorough background check and clinical review. In addition, Rula’s dedicated support team is available by phone and email to help patients with therapist selection, billing issues, insurance questions, and more.

In 2023, Rula worked with the healthcare system to automate the referral process, integrating best-practice advisory alerts into its EHR. When patients score high for symptoms of anxiety or depression during screenings, the EHR automatically asks physicians if they would like to refer them to behavioral healthcare specialists. The EHR identifies the patient's payer type, and automatically routes the referral to either internal or external care teams.

After automation, 40% of referred patients scheduled appointments, 10 percentage points higher than the industry average.

In 2024, the health system made a major push to further expand behavioral health, asking Rula to do outreach about its services to different groups in the system, including obstetrician-gynecologists, hospital case managers, and affiliated independent physician groups. In addition, Rula provided access for all of the healthcare system’s employees and dependents.

Strong rapport and a collaborative working relationship with Rula have given the client the power to navigate an ever-changing healthcare landscape. Rula consistently checks in to identify areas of opportunity for further expansion and greater support—for example, an upgrade to the e-fax system to speed and streamline information-sharing with PCPs. All of Rula’s systems and tools are HIPAA-compliant and employ the latest security measures, and all employees and therapists in the network undergo training on best practices for safeguarding patient data. In addition, Rula is innovating to provide more in-person therapy options for patients.

About Rula

Rula makes mental healthcare accessible and affordable through our network of licensed providers and unified technology platform. We connect patients with personalized in-network care within three days, typically for \$0-\$25 per session.

Our HIPAA-compliant solution simplifies the experience for employers, health plans, and insurance brokers while delivering measurable outcomes. Visit rula.com to learn how your organization can partner with Rula.

Learn more about Rula

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