

COLLABORATIVE CARE MANAGEMENT:

Transforming pediatric mental healthcare

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Executive summary

Pediatric behavioral health concerns are on the rise, with nearly 1 in 7 children in the U.S. diagnosed with a behavioral health condition—yet half go untreated. Amid this growing need, primary care providers (PCPs) often serve as the first point of contact but lack the training and support to manage these conditions effectively.

Magellan Healthcare's Collaborative Care Management (CoCM) program offers a scalable, turnkey solution that empowers pediatric clinics to deliver timely, team-based behavioral health support. Through Magellan's CoCM model, one pediatric clinic improved access, outcomes and provider satisfaction.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

84%

of referred members
enrolled in the program

56%

remained engaged or
graduated from the program

40%

reduction in depression
severity for program graduates

Backed by a track record of measurable results, Magellan's CoCM model empowers clinics to deliver behavioral healthcare that works—for patients, providers and families.

What is Collaborative Care Management?

Collaborative Care Management (CoCM) is an evidence-based, integrated model of care shown in randomized controlled trials to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs by lowering barriers to behavioral health treatment and delivering personalized, timely support.

Using a team-based approach and regular screening, the primary care physician (PCP), behavioral health care manager (BHCM) and consulting psychiatrist work together to:

- Establish a care plan and goals, which the team supports the patient in achieving
- Monitor and measure patient progress using evidence-based clinical tools
- Adjust care as needed

A psychiatric consultant meets regularly with the BHCM to review patient cases and provide treatment recommendations, which the BHCM communicates to the PCP. The PCP is responsible for prescribing medications and making referrals supported by the psychiatric consultant's guidance. Patients are tracked by a digital registry and monitored monthly using validated, measurement-based behavioral health assessments, including the Patient Health Questionnaire-Adolescent version (PHQ-A) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7).

By embedding behavioral health services directly within primary care settings, CoCM improves access by reducing wait times for appointments, eliminating the need for external referrals and providing same-day or near-immediate behavioral health support—especially critical for children who might otherwise go untreated due to provider shortages or scheduling barriers.

More than 90 randomized controlled trials have demonstrated CoCM is more effective than usual care for patients with depression, anxiety and other behavioral health conditions.¹ However, adoption in pediatric settings has lagged, often due to concerns about the diagnostic complexity and variability of behavioral health symptoms in children.²

Challenges in pediatric behavioral health

Mental health conditions among children and adolescents have become an alarming concern in the United States. According to the CDC, 1 in 7 children ages 3 – 17 (14%) have a diagnosed behavioral health condition, with anxiety and depression being the most prevalent. Yet 50% of these children do not receive treatment.³

Barriers include a shortage of pediatric behavioral health specialists, limited coordination between behavioral health providers and primary care, and discomfort among pediatric PCPs in assessing behavioral health symptoms and/or prescribing psychiatric medications. These challenges contribute to gaps in pediatric mental health care, leading to increased emergency department visits, hospitalizations and youth suicides.⁴

Why one clinic chose Collaborative Care Management

A pediatric clinic serving 7,900 patients implemented Magellan's Collaborative Care Management program based on three key drivers.

- Primary care becoming a behavioral health safety net with little training or resources resulting in staff burnout
- Increased stressors post-COVID raising behavioral health needs
- Reduced access to evidence-based mental health care for young children

Program implementation and results

At the clinic, patients are screened for anxiety and depression using the PHQ-A and GAD-7 during annual well-child visits or when a parent expresses concern. Those with low to moderate behavioral health needs are referred to Magellan's CoCM program. Magellan's licensed BHCM, co-located at the clinic, is available to see patients immediately upon referral. This co-location model eliminates delays often associated with traditional referrals to outside specialists, making behavioral health care more accessible and integrated for families.

Over a 12-month period:

229

patients ages 8 and older
were referred

84%

enrolled in the CoCM program

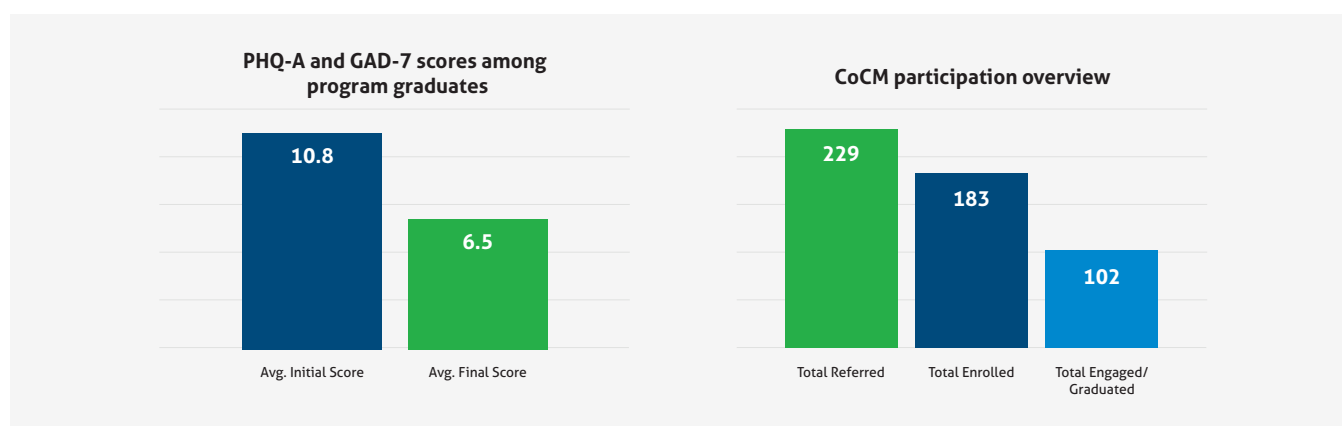
56%

remained engaged or
successfully graduated*

"This program was tremendously helpful and an exact match for my daughter's needs."

– Parent of a participating child

Patients received brief interventions monthly from the BHCM and were monitored using PHQ-A and GAD-7 assessments. Treatment plans were updated monthly through consultation between the BHCM and the consulting psychiatrist. Using the digital registry, the psychiatrist's recommendations were documented in the electronic medical record for the PCP to review. The consulting psychiatrist did not meet with patients or prescribe medications directly.



*Engaged refers to patients who remained active in treatment through the duration of the evaluation period, even if they had not yet graduated from the program. Successful graduation occurs when the patient has a 50% clinically meaningful reduction in the PHQ-A score, the assessment score is <5, and/or when the patient has successfully met their care plan goals.

Collaborative Care Management's impact on providers and families

The clinic reports increased confidence in treating patients with anxiety and depression and has improved communication between behavioral health and medical staff. Providers appreciate having expert support to guide real-time treatment decisions and report reduced stress and burnout.

"The collaborative care approach is a holistic approach. It looks at the whole person to provide the necessary care to improve physical and emotional wellbeing. It takes what is already comfortable to patients and families (the pediatrician and pediatric office) and strengthens this relationship by addressing and supporting the mild to moderate behavioral health needs of patients with the addition of the collaborative care manager and consulting psychiatrist."

– Magellan behavioral health care manager

"My daughter's BHCM was kind, inviting and encouraged our daughter to work through her challenges. Her coping abilities improved greatly through the program. We very much appreciate the care she received."

– Parent of a participating child

Conclusion

Magellan's Collaborative Care Management program equips pediatric practices with the clinical partnership and tools needed to treat children with mild to moderate behavioral health conditions. By reducing access barriers, improving provider confidence and delivering measurable results, CoCM represents a transformative shift in pediatric behavioral healthcare.

Magellan Healthcare delivers a turnkey, scalable CoCM solution, using Magellan-licensed clinicians and consulting psychiatrists aligned to primary care clinics to support behavioral health treatment.

About Magellan Healthcare

Magellan Healthcare has delivered nationally recognized behavioral health solutions to employers, health plans, and state and federal agencies for over 50 years. From employee assistance programs to Medicaid services for individuals with serious mental illness, Magellan helps more than 18 million members worldwide live healthy, vibrant lives through evidence-based innovative care.

References

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