

Rogers Behavioral Health CEO Shares Challenges, Vision for Mental Health Care Delivery

Rogers Behavioral Health President and CEO John Boyd discussed Rogers' efforts to expand access to mental health services and opportunities and challenges for mental health care during the Wisconsin Health News Newsmaker Event on April 11. Last fall, Boyd succeeded Pat Hammer who led Rogers Behavioral Health for the past 10 years.

Workforce, burnout and telehealth were all significant topics during the discussion. But Boyd also praised Wisconsin as having an "incredible story" in its health systems' commitment to integration of mental health and addiction services and offered Rogers' positive vision for innovation, partnership and future workforce as the drivers of the future state of mental health and addiction care.



Wisconsin Health News Editor Tim Stumm listens as Rogers Behavioral Health President and CEO John Boyd discusses challenges and opportunities for mental health care delivery.

Boyd explained that workforce challenges across all types of mental health and addiction clinicians is limiting capacity to care for patients everywhere.

"[Workforce shortages are] literally everywhere; I can't state that enough," said Boyd. "Physicians, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, mental health technicians, all of those. We have to limit the capacity of individuals that we treat most days because of staff shortages, and unfortunately, I think every health system is in the same boat."

"I want to call out our partners at the Wisconsin Hospital Association because they are also focused on these," Boyd said. "How we can fund additional training and education for people who are committed to Wisconsin to provide these services? It will be key to identify how we can expand digital health care to close the rural health gap and in schools."

Boyd explained that workforce is key to Rogers' strategic plan. "How do we attract more people to want to enter into the field of mental health and addiction care treatment? Because without humans, digital solutions will only take us so far. An anchor point of our five-year plan is specific to our workforce—how do we ensure that we continue to attract the clinicians and individuals that we rely on every single day to deliver this care?" asked Boyd.

While health care careers have an advantage of being meaningful, personal work, Boyd said that staff burnout caused by regulatory and reimbursement policies are a significant challenge impacting the health care workforce and innovation in health care delivery that needs to be addressed.

"Burnout is such a significant issue throughout all of health care," said Boyd. "The amount of time that an average clinician has to spend documenting the care they provided to bill for that service to justify that service is significant. A lot of people don't realize all of the behind-the-scenes support that is burdensome and definitely leads to burnout."

"So many of the things that we do are driven by regulation, policymakers or reimbursement," said Boyd. "And often times those things don't add up to a well-designed human experience for either the provider or the person seeking care."

Virtual care and telehealth are innovations that Rogers is continuing to build upon to make mental health and addiction care more accessible, particularly in rural areas, with "phenomenal results." Boyd discussed how COVID helped jump start virtual care, and Rogers' plans to expand partnerships with other providers through telehealth to expand access.

"During COVID Rogers was able to serve more people with virtual care than ever before and the results were phenomenal," Boyd shared. "We have providers that want to provide care more broadly. But we need to challenge archaic laws and reimbursement."

"[Rogers' clinicians and staff] change lives and save lives every day," said Boyd. "In this brick-and-mortar environment, imagine if there was an overlapped solution of virtual telehealth and digital care available in partnership with our other providers and clinicians in the area; there you have continuity, seamless care delivery. It is the kind of thing that people want to seek out and not avoid until they are desperate."

Boyd ended the Wisconsin Health News program again emphasizing partnership and the role of leaders in guiding innovation in a complex health care environment.

"As curious as we are to innovate as a leader, we need to do that alongside our providers and make sure that we are pacing well and that what we are doing are in fact solutions and not just another good idea," Boyd concluded.

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