Guide to ED TelePsychiatry

Empower your hospital with faster
psychiatric & behavioral health services
in the emergency department

AmplifyMD

Introduction

The growing demand for psychiatric and behavioral health services is straining emergency departments (EDs) nationwide. A critical shortage of psychiatrists, limited access to outpatient services, and rising addiction rates have converged to create a perfect storm, placing immense pressure on hospitals to fill these gaps.

This year alone, more than 6 million patients will seek care in the ED for mental health or substance use concerns.[1] Yet, most hospitals lack the onsite psychiatric support needed to diagnose, treat, and manage these cases effectively.

The impact is profound: psychiatric and behavioral health (BH) patients endure long boarding times, unnecessary admissions, and delays in care, while hospitals grapple with operational challenges and the financial strain caused by these cases.

Mental health patients are the fastest-growing segment in hospital emergency departments, with an **annual service delivery cost of more than $5.5 billion.**[2]

Fortunately, TelePsychiatry offers a proven solution to address the need for faster assessments, treatment, and disposition planning for psychiatric and behavioral health patients with acute needs. By seamlessly integrating board-certified psychiatrists into existing ED workflows, hospitals can deliver timely, expert psychiatric care, improving patient outcomes and optimizing patient flow through the ED.

About 20% of US emergency departments already use some form of TelePsychiatry.[3]
If your hospital or health system is evaluating solutions or looking to add a program in 2025, read on to learn more about:

- The benefits of TelePsychiatry in the emergency department
- Questions to ask in a needs assessment
- Considerations for choosing a TelePsychiatry partner
- Key outcomes from ED TelePsychiatry

AmplifyMD

The Benefits of an ED TelePsychiatry Program

Emergency department TelePsychiatry services significantly enhance care delivery by enabling faster patient assessments, timely treatment, and more efficient disposition decisions, all of which improve patient throughput. These services not only alleviate stress for patients experiencing mental health crises but also reduce the burden on ED providers, allowing them to focus on delivering quality care across the department.

- **Faster consults and treatment plans:** Virtual consults quickly connect ED teams with specialists, helping assess and treat patients sooner. This reduces delays in care and ensures timely psychiatric evaluations.

- **Shorter ED stays and a reduction in ED boarding**: Prompt evaluations help shorten the time spent in the ED and reduce boarding, freeing up critical resources for other patients.

- **Improved patient flow and outcomes:** Expert psychiatric support improves care coordination, leading to better outcomes for patients and fewer disruptions to overall hospital operations.

- **Better support for ED staff:** Access to psychiatric specialists eases the workload on emergency and inpatient teams, reducing burnout and improving staff satisfaction.

Time to specialist consult	
With TelePsychiatry*	Without TelePsychiatry
<1 Hour	24 hours

*AmplifyMD average response time: 38 minutes

"

We struggled with high mental health patient loads and a lack of psychiatric coverage. Patients often waited in the ED for placement without adequate treatment. TelePsychiatry has been a game changer, allowing us to stabilize patients on effective medication and get them to a baseline where they can transition to outpatient care. Now we can treat these patients instead of just holding them.

-CNO, 137-bed hospital, St. Louis, MO

Typical reasons for a TelePsych consult
- Psychiatric holds (suicidal ideation, etc.)
- Unexplained mental status changes
- Poorly controlled bipolar or schizophrenia
- Anxiety and agitation
- Substance abuse
- Delirium

AmplifyMD

Questions to ask in your needs assessment

Before starting any ED TelePsychiatry program, it is imperative to identify gaps, set goals, and strategically plan your program. When conducting your needs assessment, be sure to ask the following questions:

Understand the demand

Patient Volume: How many patients present in the ED with psych/BH needs? How many admitted medical patients require psychiatric care?

Wait Times: How long do psych/BH patients wait for an assessment? What is the wait time for a disposition decision?

Admissions: How many BH admits could be avoided with faster psychiatric care?

Review current resources

Psychiatric Staffing: Where are the current gaps in your on-call psychiatry?

Bed Capacity: Do your ED/inpatient floors have adequate space for these patients?

Technology Readiness: What existing telemedicine equipment is being used in the ED and inpatient floors? How comfortable are your teams with using virtual care?

Identify existing operational challenges

Staff Workload: How are psych/BH cases affecting your ED/inpatient teams?

Costs: What is the financial impact of long ED stays and delayed psych evaluations?

Patient Flow: How are psych/BH cases slowing down/impacting overall hospital throughput?

Set clear goals

Objectives: What are the goals for your program? Common objectives include shorter ED stays, improved throughput, fewer unnecessary admissions, better patient outcomes, and improved staff satisfaction.

Ensure alignment

Stakeholders: Is there interdepartmental agreement on the program's priority and the resources required for implementation? Engage with the ED, IT, psychiatry, and leadership teams to understand their perspectives. Consider including feedback from patients/families to ensure the program meets their needs.

Benchmark

Baseline metrics: How does your hospital or health system compare against national and local market averages?

AmplifyMD

Factors to consider when choosing a TelePsychiatry partner

Choosing the right partner is essential for achieving long-term success. Consider these key factors as you assess your options:

Clinical expertise
Ensure your partner provides board-certified psychiatrists with specialized experience in Consultation-Liaison (C-L) psychiatry and a strong commitment to supporting emergency department teams in delivering exceptional care.

Operational support
Expect robust support including:
- Licensing and credentialing processes
- Onboarding and training support
- Performance tracking and SLA reporting
- 24/7 technical and operational assistance

Scalability and flexibility
Choose a partner with comprehensive services, not just an ED point solution. Companies that can scale across specialties and clinical settings will provide more value over the long-term.

Technology integration
Avoid costly and time-consuming technology implementations. A partner should:
- Integrate seamlessly with your EHR
- Support your existing hardware
- Ensure a low lift for your IT department
- Adhere to the highest cyber-security standards

Transparent pricing
Providers with straightforward, per-consult and fractional pricing models can help you manage costs effectively.

A data-driven approach will help you scale more effectively

Implement
Launch at designated facilities

Measure
Track key data and KPIs

Feedback
Solicit from staff, remote providers, patients, families

Evaluate
Review against benchmark and program goals

Refine
Incorporate lessons learned

Scale
Expand program to additional locations

AmplifyMD

Key Outcomes from ED TelePsychiatry

ED TelePsychiatry delivers measurable outcomes that enhance patient care, streamline operations, improve throughput, and support providers.

- **Less time in the ED.** With TelePsychiatry, psych/BH patients spend less time in the ED. For example, a 450+ bed hospital experienced a **70% reduction in ED time** for psychiatric patients with TelePsychiatry services.[4]

- **Faster discharges.** At a hospital partnering with AmplifyMD for TelePsychiatry services, **82% of patients with a consult were able to discharge from the ED the same day.**[5]

- **Lower inpatient costs.** Total 30-day inpatient charges were shown to be significantly lower among TelePsychiatry recipients than a control group, **saving the hospital 26% per admission.**[6]

- **Faster inpatient psychiatric admissions.** At a hospital partnering with AmplifyMD for TelePsychiatry services, **79% of patients who met criteria were admitted to inpatient psychiatric facilities the same day.**[7]

- **Improved follow-up compliance.** Patients who receive TelePsychiatry consultations in the ED are more likely to attend follow-up outpatient appointments. **One study showed compliance increased by 187%.**[8]

- **High Satisfaction Rates.** A study reported that **97% of patients were satisfied with their ED TelePsych** consultation, with 80% agreeing that it was as good as a face-to-face visit.[9]

‹38
minutes

Request to consult with AmplifyMD

> *Partnering with AmplifyMD for telehealth has been one of the best decisions we've made. Their cost-effective solution has significantly enhanced patient care across the communities we serve, enabling patients to access vital mental health services in the emergency department.*
>
> **–Corporate Director of Telemedicine, 50 hospital system**

AmplifyMD

Does your emergency department need more support for psychiatric and behavioral health patients? Learn more.

Request information
(https://amplifymd.com/contact)

See program details
(https://amplifymd.com/medical-specialties/telepsychiatry)

About AmplifyMD

AmplifyMD is an **AI-enabled virtual care network** making remote medicine as fast and efficient as in-person care. Our technology empowers hospitals to maximize capacity, optimize provider utilization, improve quality, reduce overhead, and drive revenue. **We provide seamless access to over 15 specialties** and support health systems in using their own providers on our award-winning virtual care platform.

225+
Active programs

10,000+
Annual consults

50
State footprint

AmplifyMD

Sources

1. National Center for Health Statistics (2021), Center for Disease Control https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/mental-health.htm

2. Costs of Emergency Department Visits for Mental and Substance Use Disorders in the floorsed States (2017, revised 2020), Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality https://hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb257-ED-Costs-Mental-Substance-Use-Disorders-2017

3. National Study of Telepsychiatry Use in U.S. Emergency Departments (2016) Psychiatry Online, https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.201900237

4. The ROI of Virtual Behavioral Health in the Emergency Department (2024), Becker's Healthcare https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/telehealth/the-roi-of-virtual-behavioral-health-in-the-emergency-department.html

5. TelePsychiatry in the ED improves Timely Treatment & Discharges (2024), AmplifyMD https://amplifymd.com/telepsychiatry-in-the-ed-improves-timely-treatment-discharges/

6. Impact of a Telepsychiatry Program at Emergency Departments Statewide on the Quality, Utilization, and Costs of Mental Health Services (2015) Psychiatric Services https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.ps.201400122

7. TelePsychiatry in the ED improves Timely Treatment & Discharges (2024), AmplifyMD. https://amplifymd.com/telepsychiatry-in-the-ed-improves-timely-treatment-discharges/

8. Impact of a Telepsychiatry Program at Emergency Departments Statewide on the Quality, Utilization, and Costs of Mental Health Services (2015), Psychiatric Services https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.ps.201400122

9. Patient satisfaction with telepsychiatry in emergency departments (2020), Behavioral Sciences and the Law https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40737-020-00165-9