

## Digital Health Services to Address Mental Health Needs in Maine

**Background.** Meeting needs of people and families with mental health issues is a major challenge. Even prior to Covid19, many have not accessed treatment; these gaps have only increased, as health professional capacity is simultaneously stretched. This drives interest in identifying all methods to meet rising demand. Video telehealth improves access and distribution of services, but growth is limited by needing more professional capacity. Asynchronous digital health and self-help tools may serve as a component to help.

**Concept.** Offer and/or refer individuals to web and mobile app services that can be accessed via digital devices and other channels. Focus on youth and young adults, and family caregivers.

The DHHS Telehealth and Telemonitoring Advisory Group is interested in soliciting input on current mental health needs for youth and young adults and challenges for clinical teams, including:

- groups/conditions most prevalent
- where demand most outstrips supply
- observations with wait lists and client use of treatment options
- greatest issues for caregivers
- what would be of greatest value to help staff - during or after care delivery
- professionals' views of digital tools or apps
- apps recommended, and if so, what are client experiences with such tools?
- What do clinicians care most about in relation to mobile apps/digital therapeutics?

### Questions

1. What are the priority issues in Maine communities, regarding urgent and emergency care, wait lists for services, and other settings where needs are highest?
2. What populations, conditions, services are most needed today?
3. Where individuals are being seen urgently and emergently?
4. Describe the conditions frequency and severity
5. Is there existing data to inform this effort?
6. What are options for treatment and intervention?
7. Where are the greatest challenges? For patients/clients? For caregivers?
8. What would be most helpful for staff – during / after care delivery?
9. Are you aware of people using web/mobile apps as digital health supports for individuals and caregiver mental health issues?
10. What are health professionals' views about such digital health supports?
11. What would professionals like to know about currently available digital health support?
12. How might information on quality, cost, user experience and outcomes be helpful?

**8/23/22 Interview** (Woods)

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**"Anxiety is everywhere"** and "depression, secondary to anxiety". Maladaptive coping behaviors that began before Covid10, including self-harm and alcohol and other substance use, have been significantly amplified with social isolation and restrictions. As time has gone by, these behaviors have become habits and now more difficult for individuals to control their behaviors.

**"Self-harm is big.** It's out of control." There is considerable online pressure and bullying, such as on Instagram. Messages that youth get from one another and on social media are not OK.

**Social media harms.** This leads to worsening anxiety, use of substances – cannabis, alcohol, opioids.

**Families put pressure on youth,** adding to teens' abnormal views of 'perfectionism'. Family situations – divorce and other stress – add to this environmental stress caused by social media.

**There are major treatment gaps.** Waiting lists are growing, especially in rural areas. Treatment needs to be individualized. People need much more facilitated group therapy. Some could benefit from exposure therapy. But there are only so many therapists; in some areas, few or none.

**"I rarely recommend apps"**. "They need to unplug and decrease video time." There are concerns about smartphone and negative views about them, leading to advice to decrease screen time and avoiding apps, as these are perceived as negatively affecting mood and behaviors.

**Teens talk about apps.** They mention help using Headspace and Calm. There is some awareness of apps for mood and exercise, such as Mood Panda to track moods. However, there is also concern about harms from apps such as Calm.

**Colleagues talk to one another.** If there were information about benefits and lack of harm for specific apps, there might be interest in learning about this. "I think a few pediatricians may be recommending apps."

## Resources (no quality ratings)

1. Health Navigator New Zealand – review of [mental health apps](#). Overseen by a charitable trust.
2. One Mind Psyber Guide – [About](#)
  - a. [Full App Guide](#)
  - b. [Digital Tool Guide for Employers](#)
  - c. App Scoring <https://onemindpsyberguide.org/about-psyberguide/>
3. Evaluation of Mental Health Mobile Applications. AHRQ Technical Brief 41, Evidence Based Practice Centers. May 2022. <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/products/mental-health-apps/report>
4. Mobile App Rating Scale ([MARS](#))
5. American Psychiatric Association – App Advisor Initiative - [mobile app rating guide](#).
6. National Health Service (UK) – [well-being apps](#)
7. NYC Well [website](#) – run by Vibrant Emotional Health on behalf of NYC Dept of Health. Text, call & chat. [Includes App Library](#) – has some details on apps, costs.
8. Therapy for people who can't go to therapy. [New York Times, September 2022](#).
9. 13 of the best mental health apps to use in 2022. [Healthline post, June 2022](#).
10. Project Healthy Minds – [resources](#) includes telehealth and app resources.
11. Satre DD et. al. Opportunities to Integrate Mobile App-Based Interventions Into Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services in the Wake of COVID-19. Am J Health Promot. 2021 Nov;35(8):1178-1183. [PDF](#)
12. Drissi N et. al. An analysis on self-management and treatment-related functionality and characteristics of highly rated anxiety apps. Int J Med Inform. 2020 Sep;141:104243. [PDF](#)
13. Martinengo L et. al. Self-guided Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Apps for Depression: Systematic Assessment of Features, Functionality, and Congruence With Evidence. J Med Internet Res. 2021 Jul 30;23(7):e27619. [PDF](#)
14. Strudwick G, McLay D, et. al. Development of a Resource Guide to Support the Engagement of Mental Health Providers and Patients With Digital Health Tools: Multimethod Study. J Med Internet Res 2021;23(4):e25773. [PDF](#).
  - a. [Document](#) from project – Digital Mental Health Tools: resources to support mental health clinical practice (Canada).