

Promesa Behavioral Health: Meeting Clients Where They Are

Headquartered in Fresno, California, Promesa Behavioral Health implemented the Telecare Outpatient Alcohol and Drug Services (TOADS) program in 2012 as part of SAMHSA's Targeted Capacity Expansion: Technology-Assisted Care grant to enhance substance abuse treatment services for clients living in rural communities with limited access to mental health care. From the beginning, TOADS has provided quality care to clients of all ages and backgrounds across counties in California's Central Valley. Whether using text messaging, a portal, or videoconferencing, the partnership between treatment and technology means that *clients get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.*

For program manager Mandi Reed, TOADS is about meeting clients where they are and helping them get on the road to recovery. "It's amazing how quickly even those who think they're unskilled adapt to technology," said Mandi. For some, learning how to use technology has been a gradual process. One client enrolled in the program—a 79-year-old grandmother—was using a computer for the first time. She initially participated in face-to-face counseling sessions and eventually became comfortable enough participating via remote telecare sessions. Now, she uses her computer to connect with her grandkids on a regular basis. This client has become enthusiastic about telecare and is now part of a virtual psychoeducation group!

The TOADS team develops technology-based treatment plans based on the kinds of technology clients have available to them and their comfort level using different platforms. In some cases, clients may not have reliable access to a computer, cell phone, or wireless connection. To overcome this obstacle, Promesa has established three conveniently located technology hubs (distal sites) at partnering agencies—like the Holy Cross Center for Women—so that clients can complete telecare sessions without having to travel long distances to meet with their counselor. Promesa hopes to continue expanding community partnership opportunities and include additional touch-down sites for clients throughout its service area. "I'm often stunned by clients' appreciation of how the program has met their needs. They are so grateful for the convenience of telecare," said Mandi.

Promesa recently launched a technology open house to help clients with basic technology questions. Members from the IT department were on hand to troubleshoot issues with devices and provide general guidance. The event was a hit with clients and will likely be offered quarterly. To supplement in-person assistance, Promesa is getting ready to record video tutorials to help clients maximize their experience using technology.

TOADS is offering virtual cognitive behavioral group sessions on a variety of topics ranging from anxiety and depression to coping skills and stages of recovery. Promesa decided to use the WebEx operating system to host the sessions because of its simplicity and flexibility. The organization is committed to supporting clients in their recovery at home and in the community. Mandi shared, "We have a client who has agoraphobia whom we advised to enter residential care. He has thrived there, so much so that he is returning to TOADS as a client and has requested our guidance to become a counselor himself!"

Interested in learning more about the TOADS program? Visit the program's Web site at <http://promesabehavioral.org/toads/>.