



INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & PRIMARY CARE: SNAPSHOT OF AN INTEGRATED PRACTICE

The AHRQ Academy Lexicon's consensus definition of integrated behavioral health and primary care is: the care that results from a practice team of primary care and behavioral health clinicians working together with patients and families, using a systematic and cost-effective approach to provide patient centered care for a defined population. This care may address mental health and substance abuse conditions, health behaviors (including their contribution to chronic medical illnesses), life stressors and crises, stress-related physical symptoms, and ineffective patterns of health care utilization.

If you or your colleagues plan to transform your practice into an integrated behavioral health practice, here are the key defining features you'll need to build or develop:

Your integrated behavioral health practice should be supported by:

- **A practice team tailored to the needs of each patient and situation.**

Team members should have well-defined roles and a range of expertise that includes chronic disease care, acute care, wellness and prevention, behavior change, mental health, and substance use treatment. Team members don't necessarily have to be in the same office space, but they must share workflows, processes, and other operations. All team members should get formal or on-the-job training in team building and collaboration. Patients and families are part of the team.

- **Shared responsibility to provide whole-person care for a defined population.**

Medical and behavioral health clinicians work together to care for their patients. You might use the integrated approach with the practice's entire patient population or just a subset.

- **A systematic clinical approach.**

There is a consistent way to identify patients who need integrated behavioral health care. Well-developed protocols detail how patients and providers work together to develop unified care plans the whole practice team follows. The plan sets goals, outlines treatments (including patient self-management), and documents progress in a shared electronic health record. The team uses care registries and has clear plans in place for followup, adjustment of treatment, and relapse prevention.

- **A community, population, or individuals** who expect integrated behavioral health and primary care as the normal way care is provided.
- **A sustainable business model** with office systems, processes, and leadership that consistently support integrated behavioral health.
- **Continuous quality improvement** that uses routine collection, assessment, and reporting of practice-based outcomes to measure effectiveness.

LEARN MORE

Find examples of successful practice and guidance on how to achieve the transformation in the AHRQ Academy *Integration Playbook*.
integrationacademy.ahrq.gov/playbook/about-playbook

Use the AHRQ Academy *Lexicon for Behavioral Health and Primary Care Integration* for more detailed information on the elements of integrated practice.
integrationacademy.ahrq.gov/lexicon

