

## **Children's Wisconsin innovative telehealth experience for kid's mental and behavioral health care**

Youth in Wisconsin were already experiencing alarming rates of mental health hospitalizations, suicide rates and depression before the COVID-19 pandemic; now, the effects of the pandemic are exacerbating what was already a growing national and state crisis. In 2020, Children's Wisconsin quickly pivoted to redesign virtual capabilities and serve kids through telehealth services. Before April 2020, Children's did not have a single telehealth visit for mental and behavioral health, but in the year since, the mental and behavioral health team has completed nearly 60,000 telehealth visits with kids across the state. In fact, even as in-person visits have resumed, telehealth still accounts for the majority of the mental and behavioral health appointments.

Led by a couple of innovative therapists, Children's took tele-therapy to the next level by creating virtual therapy offices. These "Zoom rooms" are kid-friendly, interactive web interfaces that kids and parents can explore with their provider. Each room they enter has different themes, décor and interactive resources that kids can explore. In addition, Children's brought on three child and adolescent psychiatrists who specialize in providing telehealth. By quickly expanding the psychiatrist team through a hybrid model of in-person and telehealth sessions, Children's has greatly expanded timely access to kids who need their care. Most importantly, use of this audio and video technology enabled us to reach kids who face barriers to accessing care, whether that be issues with transportation or challenges in taking time off of school or work.

-Children's Wisconsin