

Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care Awarded \$901,123 to Improve Telehealth Psychiatry Services in Vermont Emergency Departments

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The Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, Inc. (VPQHC) received a \$901,123 Congressionally Directed Spending grant from Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to support coordination of a Vermont Emergency Telepsychiatry Network. The project will support Vermont Emergency Departments (EDs) in caring for people seeking emergency mental health services.

The Vermont Emergency Telepsychiatry Network (VETN) will be a statewide system to help people with acute mental health crises waiting in EDs access timely psychiatric assessment via telehealth. The VETN will have five areas of focus: program management; training; demonstration projects; hospital enhancements; and program evaluation.

Since January, thanks to philanthropic funding from the Vermont Community Foundation, VPQHC has been partnering with Northeast Telehealth Resource Center (NETRC) to assess the need for an emergency telehealth psychiatry (telepsychiatry) network. The SAMHSA-funded activities will occur from October 2022 through September 2023.

All hospital EDs in the state will have the opportunity to purchase appropriate equipment and services, share best practices, and participate in training. Two hospitals (to be determined) will be selected for projects to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of contracting for telepsychiatry services.

Vermonters with mental health conditions are waiting days in EDs before they can get admitted to psychiatric inpatient care or discharged. Vermont EDs not yet offering telepsychiatry services identified ways that VETN might benefit them: providing standards-based psychiatric care in a timely manner, reducing transportation issues, decreasing inpatient utilization and costs, reducing wait times throughout the ED, improving patient outcomes, and decreasing stigma faced by people with mental health conditions.

About: [VPQHC](#) is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1988 and established by the Vermont Legislature as an independent, non-regulatory, peer review committee, and statewide quality assurance organization.

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