

eClinicalWorks CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



Project Vida

How Telemedicine Improves Access to Healthcare

The Challenge

Project Vida Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center located in El Paso, Texas, has 13 locations, 21 providers, and serves 13,000+ patients, including many who have limited access to transportation. They needed to find new ways to provide a full range of medical and behavioral health services to all patients.

The Solution

As an eClinicalWorks customer, Project Vida Health Center enjoys an industry-leading EHR to help them deliver comprehensive, integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health services. By adding healow TeleVisits™, the practice gave patients and providers alike additional options for receiving and providing care.

The Results

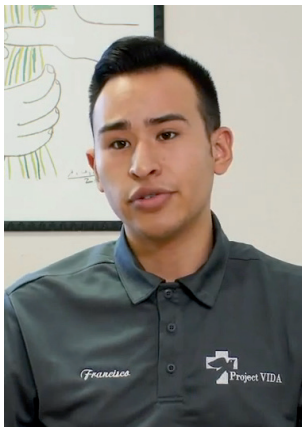
With healow TeleVisits, Project Vida has been able to maintain uninterrupted services to patients with their preferred providers. Patients without access to computers at home can come to the center and use telemedicine for behavioral health counseling with providers working from their homes or other offices.

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Life at the Borderplex

They call it the Borderplex. At the far western tip of Texas, where the Rio Grande turns east and forms the border between the U.S. and Mexico, lie the adjoining cities of El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, in the state of Chihuahua. Together with nearby Las Cruces, New Mexico, there are well over 1



Francisco Adame,
Deputy Behavioral Health Officer

million people in this complex and economically dynamic region. Each day, thousands cross the border each way for work and family.

As in any major metropolitan area, the health needs of El Pasoans are as diverse as the city's neighborhoods.

Beginning in 1991, a series of Community Congresses were held to identify real-life needs and determine how best to meet those needs.

"Project Vida began in 1991 in a small adobe home in the Chamizal neighborhood of south-central El Paso," notes the practice's website.

"Project Vida is set on going to where the need is," said Francisco Adame, Deputy Behavioral Health Officer. "We want to help the uninsured and underserved population. There are a lot of individuals who are uninsured, who don't have a legal status, so we want to help all those individuals. When they interact with our staff, they see how different we are from other places and how much we care about our quality of care. So, they tell

each other about our services. The community and partner agencies recommend us. Our patients are very happy."

Overcoming Transportation Challenges

"Some of these individuals don't have transportation," Adame said. "They rely upon loved ones, friends, or taking public transportation. And even though Project Vida does have multiple locations throughout the city, sometimes they're not close enough."

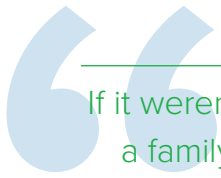
Adame said that Project Vida Health Center is an integrated care setting, meaning they offer medical, dental, and behavioral health services, along with other social services, including childcare, parenting education, housing support, homelessness prevention, smoking cessation, and healthy cooking and fitness classes.

That holistic approach to health requires one additional key: making it possible for patients to maintain ongoing relationships with their providers.

"Maybe they live on one side of town, and their appointment's on the other side of town," Adame said. "We started TeleVisits primarily because there was the need to reach individuals who could not come to certain facilities. We didn't know we were going to keep it at the beginning, but it turned out to be great!"

Flexibility in the Use of Telemedicine

In the usual telemedicine model, providers working from a central office connect with patients in their homes or workplaces. As long as the patients have a computer or smartphone, along with an internet connection, many routine and check-in visits, as well as many behavioral and mental health visits, can be



If it weren't for healow TeleVisits, I would have to make a choice between work and raising a family, and that's not a decision that I want to make. It has allowed me to be home with my kids, pick them up from school. It's allowed me to have much more balance in my life than I had before I was doing the TeleVisits. My kids are pretty happy with that, too, because I'm able to go downstairs when I have a little break, see my baby, then come back up and see my clients. So, it's been great.

– Alynna Manriquez, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

conducted successfully. Indeed, many providers and patients who use healow TeleVisits report that they detect little or no difference between a telemedicine visit and the in-office experience.

Project Vida's patients and providers have improvised on that care model. Not all El Pasoans served by the health center have ready access to a computer and the kind of stable, private internet connection needed for a medical visit.

At the same time, not all of Project Vida's providers are able or willing to be in the office every day. They may live in another city or prefer to work from home.

Project Vida has met the needs of both by bringing patients to the health center, where they can use the computers and internet connections to meet with the providers of their choice who are off-site.

Provider Perspective: Achieving Work/Life Balance

Recently, Behavioral Counselor Rosalina Ruiz spent time in Houston but wanted to continue to serve her patients in El Paso.

"I was able to treat traumas, depression, anxiety, misconduct/behavioral issues, and learning disabilities," Ruiz said. "I was treating both adults and children. It was very helpful. They feel like they can continue their process without interrupting it. They could complete their therapy sessions in a productive way."

For Alynna Manriquez, a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, healow TeleVisits has made it possible for her to serve her patients and raise her children.

"If it weren't for TeleVisits," she said, "I would have to make a choice between work and raising a family, and that's not a decision that I want to make. It has allowed me to be home with my kids, pick them up from school. It's allowed me to have much more balance in my life than I had before I was doing the TeleVisits. My kids are pretty happy with that, too, because I'm able to go downstairs when I have a little break, see my baby, then come back up and see my clients. So, it's been great."

Patient Perspective: Just Like an In-Person Visit

"Yes, using the TeleVisits is not any different than if she were here in person," said Carmen Luna, one of Manriquez's patients. "I can converse with her and tell her my problems. She can adjust any medications. We can do all that through telecommunications. So, even though she's not here, I still get to communicate with her."

The seamlessness of the healow TeleVisits experience is the result of innovative design and complete integration with the eClinicalWorks EHR, resulting in an experience that is easy for all users.

"I like the way the vitals are handled," said Michael Delaney, a behavioral healthcare medical assistant at Project Vida. "I've worked with other EMRs, and I feel eClinicalWorks is very easy as far as putting in information for the heart rate, O2, and everything like that. And the patients do enjoy the fact that it's just a couple of clicks. They enjoy the easiness of it and the access that they have."

"The level of care is comparable to a face-to-face visit," Manriquez added, "and for some clients may



Project Vida has given telemedicine a twist, connecting patients at the health center to providers in remote locations — promoting better care and helping both achieve better balance in their lives.

even be preferable, because sometimes there's a lot of anxiety meeting a provider face to face. Being by themselves, in a small room, can help ease that."

healow TeleVisits & the EHR: Total Integration

The seamless integration between healow TeleVisits and the eClinicalWorks EHR means that providers and staff at Project Vida can focus on their patients, not troubleshooting technology.

"Having eCW has made my job easier because I have access to all of the data from the patient when they call me to ask for something," said Michelle Alvarado, Clinical Care Manager. "I can talk to the other providers, access patients' charts, and make appointments. All of that is really easy."

"If we did not have that integration through eClinicalWorks," Adame said, "we would miss out on a lot of stuff. We're able to see medications, social history. It helps us get a better picture of how to help the patient. A provider can look at their chart, know that this patient only sees a behavioral health provider, and can transfer them. Even that helps a lot."

A Bright Future in El Paso

The providers and staff at Project Vida Health Center are confident that they have the right healthcare IT partner to meet emerging challenges as healthcare changes.

"We're able to focus on the patient, keep good eye contact and everything, and then still be finishing our Note, which is really important," said Manriquez. "We want to make sure that we're getting our documentation done in a timely way. It has been efficient, really going well."

healow TeleVisits have been so successful, Adame said, that Project Vida plans to expand their use to provide psychiatric services to local school districts, where it would be very difficult to station a provider.

"We plan to be in other facilities and partnering with other agencies," Adame said. "Having TeleVisits with eClinicalWorks is great because we can expand without necessarily having to have our staff here. We can continue the mission of improving care, and going to where the need is, which is what Project Vida is about." ■