

Wilderness Health Announces Emergency Department TeleMental Health Program

(Two Harbors, MN) – Wilderness Health (WH) in partnership with member hospitals, recognized a major gap in care for patients needing mental healthcare in the Emergency Department. For example, at North Shore Health (NSH), in Grand Marais, some patients who needed specialized psychiatric care were waiting in the emergency room while the staff sought advanced care options. In Cook County, there are no inpatient facilities for mental health care available. Kimber Wraalstad, CEO of North Shore Health, believed that the hospital needs to be able to offer more than a safe place to stay when patients with mental health needs come in.

With the help of Northern Minnesota native Chandra White (APRN, CNP, PFMHNP) and Adaptive Telehealth, Wilderness Health is proud to announce the implementation of the Emergency Department TeleMental Health program at North Shore Health.

Now, when a patient is waiting in the Emergency Department at NSH for advanced care, the doctors onsite have increased options for specialized mental health services. The staff can connect patients in crisis to Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Chandra White through a secure and easy-to-use video visit platform. White has an office on the Iron Range in Minnesota and is very familiar with the north shore and the residents who brave the winters there. By connecting patients with psychiatric care through telehealth in the Emergency Department, North Shore Health can set patients on a path to wellness.

According to Zomi Bloom, Telehealth Program Manager for Wilderness Health, “Rural Northeastern Minnesota has fewer mental healthcare providers for the population than are needed. This leads to long wait times. We are excited to offer additional options for quality mental healthcare in Cook County and beyond.”

Wilderness Health has been working with their members, including North Shore Health, to pilot a telepsychiatry program through a telehealth focused grant. The Emergency Department TeleMental Health program at North Shore Health began on December 18, 2023, and is available now. WH looks forward to continuing to offer expanded access to mental healthcare through telehealth across rural northeastern Minnesota.

About the Wilderness Health Telehealth Program- The goal of the WH Telehealth Program is to improve access to mental and behavioral health services in Northeastern Minnesota through the use of telehealth. Using what we’ve learned, we will build sustainable telehealth models that bring primary and specialty care to patients into the future. Telehealth program materials produced by WH are supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$771,000 with 10% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

About Wilderness Health- a non-profit collaborative of independent providers working together to improve rural health care in Northeastern Minnesota and Wisconsin. Headquartered in Two Harbors since 2013, Wilderness Health aims to create a unified and supportive network for its members through its core values of collaboration, independence, networking, and quality.

Wilderness Health Members:

Bigfork Valley Hospital

Community Memorial Hospital

Cook Hospital

Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital

Fairview Range / Range Regional Health Services

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital

Lake View Hospital

North Shore Health

St. Luke's