

# Telemental Health Services in Rural Clinics CMHC

## Presentation to Nevada Mental Health Plan Implementation Commission

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By

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### **President's Commission Report: Goal 6 Technology is used to access mental health care and information**

#### **Recommendation 6.1 Use health technology and telehealth to improve access and coordination of mental health care, especially for Americans in remote areas or in underserved populations**

In October 2003, Rural Clinics CMHC initiated an ongoing telemental health project in the Silver Springs office by connecting a contract psychiatrist in Reno to the clinic by computer/video conference equipment. Only two of 42 clients served via video conference have expressed concern about the use of the equipment. The client caseload in the Medication Clinic at Silver Springs was 98 in September 2003. We are developing plans to extend the telemental health project to the Yerington office, starting January 2004. Yerington has 169 persons in Medication Clinic.

When Yerington is added we will be serving approximately 267 persons in Medication Clinics via telemental health, or 18% of the total Medication Clinic caseload of 1482.

Early anecdotal reports show a very positive reception by persons served. The psychiatrist reports high satisfaction with the procedure. It is noteworthy that the psychiatrist does make site visits to help balance the traditional approach with the telemental health approach.

The cost of equipment will be offset by savings in travel costs for contractors. For example, travel costs for a psychiatrist from Reno to serve Yerington is approximately \$180 per visit. If three of four service days per month are provided by telehealth technology, the monthly savings would be \$540. Annual savings would be \$6,480.

EXHIBIT L MentalHealth Document consists of 2 pages.

- Entire document provided.
- Due to size limitations, pages \_\_\_\_\_ provided. A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-6827) or e-mail [library@lcb.state.nv.us](mailto:library@lcb.state.nv.us).

Meeting Date 11/20/03

### Collaboration with UNR School of Medicine Outreach Office

Gerald Ackerman, Director of the School of Medicine Outreach Office, is collaborating with Rural Clinics to enhance the utilization of telemental health services by using video conferencing equipment placed in rural hospitals, health clinics and on Indian reservations. While not as convenient as having equipment in one's own office, use of this equipment incurs no cost to Rural Clinics. Thus, cost savings would be realized at two levels: reduced travel costs of contractors and staff and no cost for equipment.

The availability of this sophisticated, high quality video conference equipment in areas such as Ely, Eureka, Wendover, Elko, Hawthorne, Yerington, Duck Water and Reno will allow Rural Clinics to expand telemental health services from Reno to numerous sites in rural Nevada. In addition, this equipment will allow for the expansion of services to include psychotherapy by psychologists, social workers, and marriage and family therapists, service coordination by case managers and nursing by registered nurses. Finally, dually licensed clinicians under contract with Rural Clinics to provide services to persons with co-occurring disorders could also utilize the equipment to improve accessibility of services.

We estimate a savings of \$16,560 a year in travel and per diem costs for the Ely co-occurring disorders program (based on two of three monthly "visits" conducted by video conferencing equipment from Reno to Ely). That savings would purchase 276 hours of additional clinical treatment at \$60 per hour. Contractors would likely be retained for longer periods of time if time-consuming road trips were significantly reduced.

### Recommendations

- Continue to explore possibilities with UNR Medical School Outreach Office.
- Work within the Mental Health and Developmental Services Division to seek funds to support telemental health in rural Nevada.
- Develop outcome measures, including client satisfaction measure and compare with traditional face-to-face services.
- Expand use to include meetings, case staffings, community meetings.