

## PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS DEPRESSION SCREENING & FOLLOW-UP

In April 2022, Progressive Community Health Centers' (Progressive) Quality Improvement Team and Board of Directors set out to increase their depression screening and follow-up rates from 48% to 75%. Progressive formed a multi-disciplinary workgroup comprised of Behavioral Health Consultants (BHCs), Clinical Operations, Medical Directors, and a lead Medical Assistant. The team reviewed screening tools, implemented the Patient Health Questionnaire with nine or two standard questions (PHQ-9 or PHQ-2), researched metric definitions and specifications, and considered exclusions. The team rolled out an initial workflow in June 2023 under the leadership of a Physician Assistant. After analyzing data, the team soon recognized that the "follow-up" was the part that was lacking. In order to address this, they partnered with a Behavioral Health Clinical Pharmacist who began supporting the follow-up component with a renewed focus on Electronic Health Record (EHR) documentation.

The team implemented a streamlined workflow that increased consistency in screening and capturing data and reduced hesitancy among staff and patients to implement or complete the questionnaires. Integration of BHCs into the workflow made staff more comfortable because they knew they had extra support to address any concerns brought up by the questionnaires, and patients knew that they would answer the questionnaires during the visit. Providers were able to easily track follow-ups in the EHR, which ensured that no interventions were missed. Engaging all stakeholders in the development of the workflow and involving BHCs in navigating challenging conversations further strengthened the screening and follow-up process.

Some examples of patient successes include Mr. W who had an initial seven-question General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) score of 16 and a final GAD-7 score of seven, which showed a decrease in general anxiety and an improvement in overall mental wellbeing. Mr. W felt more comfortable at



appointments after medication adjustments, and he reported that he started playing the saxophone with his grandson again. In another example, Ms. H had an initial PHQ-9 score of 14 and final PHQ-9 score of four. This shows a decrease in depressive symptoms and an improvement in overall mental wellbeing. Ms. H reported noticeable differences in quality of life and mood after medication modifications.

As of June 2024, Progressive surpassed their goal and achieved an 84% performance rate for depression screening and follow-up. The improvements Progressive made ensured that depression screening and follow-up is accessible and standardized for all patients ages 12 and above, regardless of background or circumstance. The universal approach to depression screening and follow-up also ensures that mental health care is normalized and integrated into routine care, reducing stigma and making it more likely that patients will receive necessary and timely care.