



Community Mental Health: Emerging Opportunities and Threats in a Post-Covid World

by Centerstone CEO David Guth
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Since the onset of the pandemic, the mental health field has also made significant progress by introducing and utilizing new technology like artificial intelligence (AI) to assist providers. AI tools, like those being introduced at Centerstone through our partnership with Lyssn, can help clinicians become stronger professionals through practice, take quicker and more accurate progress notes, and streamline administrative tasks such as billing and scheduling that help improve overall operational efficiency. There are between 10,000 and 20,000 mental health apps available on the market, many of which have integrated AI into their features.

In addition to greater access and efficiencies in care, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for a shift in stigma surrounding mental health. More often, we are now seeing people talk about their own journeys with recovery and mental health in ways that they did not before. A sharp decrease in stigma, coupled with greater access to care, meant a major influx of patients. A recent American Psychological Association [study](#) reported that nearly three quarters of practitioners have longer waitlists than they did before the pandemic.

This significant increase in people needing care, however, has led in part to increased burnout and workforce shortage issues for mental health providers. And, these issues have overlapped with the unprecedented numbers of healthcare professionals who have left jobs, and even their industries, during the pandemic. For many providers, like Centerstone, we continue working to catch-up, to recruit and retain exceptional talent, and provide the best possible care for our patients.

I am inspired by the rapid innovation that is occurring throughout our segment of the profession and marvel at the amazing progress we've made and how we might meet the challenges that remain. A greater number of people seeking mental healthcare means more lives saved. And while this is ultimately the goal for the mental health care industry, this influx leaves us at a crossroads of different challenges – workforce issues, funding for programming, and how to make services as accessible as possible for those in need. Because there are so many mental health organizations that now have to do more for less, there is a huge need for these organizations to come together and collaborate with each other in a way that might seem foreign, but ultimately better supports their missions and their patients.

This is why Centerstone continues to invest in innovative new ideas, new technologies, and collaborative partnerships with other organizations to help us do more than we ever could alone.

David Guth is the Chief Executive Officer at Centerstone, a nonprofit health system specializing in mental health and substance use disorder services. Learn more at [Centerstone.org](https://www.Centerstone.org).