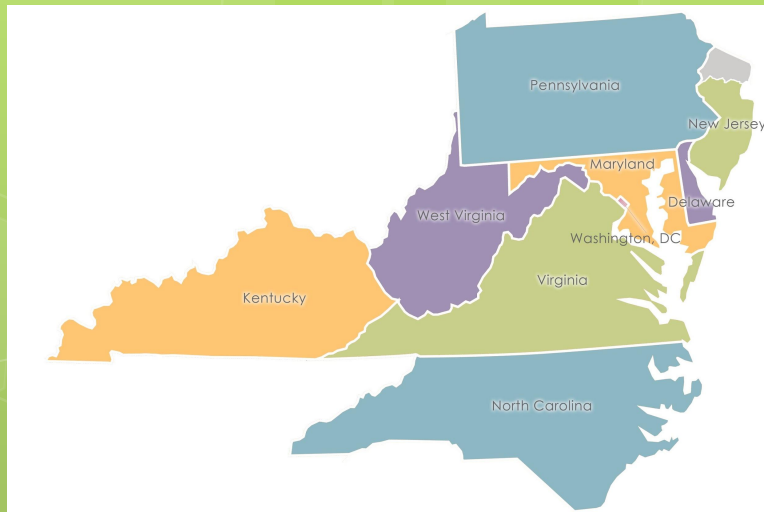




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## Building the Telemental Health Safety Net through Free and Charitable Clinics

# The Back Story



- In 2014, Virginia Senator Creigh Deeds son, Gus, died by suicide after years of struggling with bipolar disorder
- Just hours before, Gus stabbed his father in a mental health crisis

## Tragedy In Virginia Preceded By Son's Psychiatric Evaluation

By Mark Memmott / NPR

Published November 20, 2013 at 3:28 AM PST



This story was published more than 11 years ago.



*Don Patterson*

## The Back Story



## Lawmaker, nearly killed by son, works to improve mental health care in Virginia



## A Personal Tragedy Sparks a Mission

Identify what tasks are important to your larger business goals

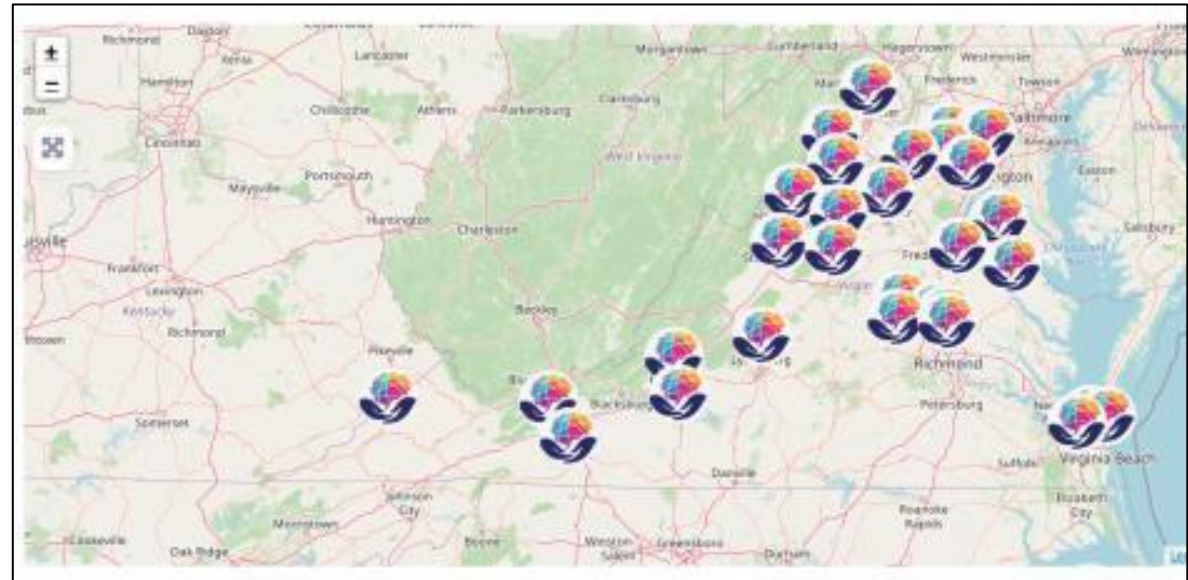




# The Back Story



- **December 2021:** Decision to restructure the pilot to go statewide
- **December 2022:** Virginia Telemental Health Initiative officially launched



# There is a Mental Health Crisis in Virginia

100%

of Virginia's localities are  
*experiencing shortages* of  
mental health professionals.  
([hrsa.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov))

# There is a Mental Health Crisis in Virginia



Virginia ranks in the *bottom third* of states, indicating higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to mental health services.

(Mental Health America)

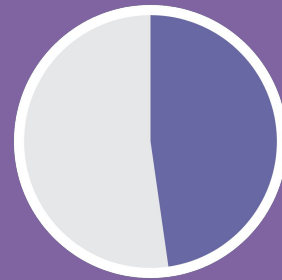
# There is a Mental Health Crisis in Virginia



**6.5%**

Adult Virginians with Any Mental  
Illness Who Are Also Uninsured

2023



**47.4%**

Adult Virginians with Any Mental  
Illness Who Did Not Receive Treatment

2023



**31.5%**

Adult Virginians with Any Mental  
Illness Reporting Unmet Need

2023



## THE CHALLENGE:

# For Virginia's Mental Health Safety Net

Free and Charitable Clinics report they have *a significant need for high-quality referral options for behavioral and mental health services*; many currently have a waiting list and/or know of patients in need of this type of support.

THE CHALLENGE:

# For Virginia's Mental Health Safety Net

38%

of Free and Charitable  
Clinics offer behavioral and  
mental health services

THE CHALLENGE:

## For Virginia's Mental Health Safety Net

80%

of Free and Charitable Clinic  
respondents offered telehealth  
during the COVID-19 pandemic

THE CHALLENGE:

# For Mental Health Providers Seeking Licensure

Virginia has robust licensed mental health provider (LMHP) training programs but *aspiring mental health providers need more support to achieve full licensure...*

THE CHALLENGE:

# For Mental Health Providers Seeking Licensure

*Residency training is often not formalized* and requires the pre-LMHP to individually pay for clinical supervision needed outside of an employment situation.



THE CHALLENGE:

# For Mental Health Providers Seeking Licensure

Residents feel that *the telemental health training they receive formally is insufficient* to support their adoption of best practices in this area.

THE CHALLENGE:

# For Mental Health Providers Seeking Licensure

Furthermore, *residency may not offer the diversity of experience the pre-LMHP may need* to satisfy all licensure requirements.

THE CHALLENGE:

# For Mental Health Providers Seeking Licensure

It is imperative to expedite the licensure process for aspiring mental health professionals, ensuring they undergo diverse and comprehensive training.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

# Telehealth Improves Access to Care

According to the 2024 Benchmarking Telehealth Usage in Virginia Survey:

92% of providers agree  
telehealth allows them to  
**address patient care barriers**

84% of providers agree  
telehealth allows them  
**to see more patients**

THE OPPORTUNITY:

# Telehealth Improves Access to Care

Other respondents said telehealth has allowed them to:

“...serve patients in underserved areas!”

“...provide therapy to clients with transportation barriers or health conditions preventing them from being seen in person.”



**THE OPPORTUNITY:**

# **Strengthen the Workforce and Mental Health Safety Net**

**There are more than 70  
free and charitable clinics  
in VAFCC's network.**



# A Virginia-Grown Solution

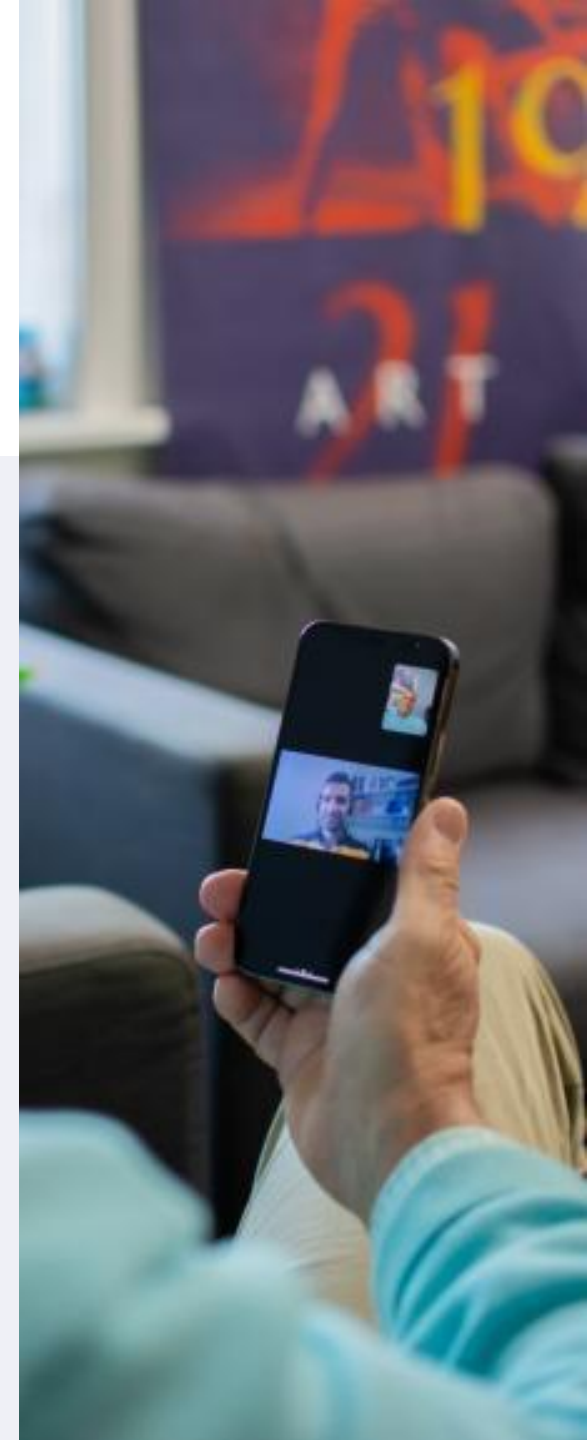
The Virginia Telemental Health Initiative (VTMHI) is a **first-of-its-kind** statewide virtual free mental health clinic and workforce development program that supports un- and underinsured Virginians by working together with the Commonwealth's free and charitable clinics and pre-licensed mental health provider volunteers who are in the process of pursuing licensure.



# A Virginia-Grown Solution

**VTMHI's mission is twofold:** to expand access to mental health services for ALL Virginians in need, and to fortify the mental health workforce by dismantling barriers to licensure.

**We strive to create a future where mental health is accessible, inclusive, and supported by a diverse workforce.**



# Putting It All Together



## Pre-Licensed Mental Health Providers



Bears the responsibility for finding clients and securing supervision to meet licensure requirements

## Virginia Telemental Health Initiative



Bridges providers with diverse, underserved clients, offering supervision, telehealth experience, and training - all at no cost

## Licensed Mental Health Professionals



Accelerates the path to independent in-person and virtual practice, addressing Virginia's mental health workforce shortage



# Partnering with Virginia's Free and Charitable Clinics

VTMHI seeks to **equip clinics with essential resources** for improving telemental health services and facilitating referrals to care. Enhancing the integration of telemental health into clinics expands their role as comprehensive medical homes for patients. Resources offered to partnering clinics include:

- Providing direct telemental health care to eligible clinic patients at no cost to the referring clinic or the patient
- Education on integrating telemental health services to in-person care
- Enhancing safety planning and screening processes
- Expanding referral capacity with needed mental health providers



# Partnering with Virginia's Free and Charitable Clinics

“Since the launch of VTMHI, we have been able to offer an initial counseling visit to patients within 24 hours in most cases. This has been immensely helpful for patients who have recently discharged from inpatient psychiatric care or have a more urgent need.

We have also had an influx of referrals from pre-trial court service officers. This partnership is allowing these patients to engage quickly in services to address concerns such as substance use and anger management.”

- **SHANNON RAYBUCK**    Mental Health Care Coordinator | Fauquier Free Clinic

# Partnering with Virginia's Free and Charitable Clinics

“Many of our Spanish speaking patients, especially older patients, want to talk to a provider in their own language without using an interpreter. VTMHI has been able to connect patient referrals with providers who can speak Spanish, which has been a huge benefit.”

■ **BETH COLLINS**  
Guadalupe Free Clinic

“For patients without insurance, VTMHI is usually the first referral option for us.

These patients don't have the money to pay for therapy, and they have been happy with the virtual care.”

■ **NIKKI KEMP, NP-C**  
Bernard Healthcare Center

# Free Clinic Partners

**AND MORE TO COME IN 2025!**

- ADAMS Compassionate Healthcare Network
- Arlington Free Clinic
- Augusta Regional Dental Clinic
- Bernard Healthcare Center/Free Clinic of Franklin County
- Blue Ridge Free Clinic
- Bradley Free Clinic
- Brock Hughes Medical Center
- Charlottesville Free Clinic
- Chesapeake Care Clinic
- CrossOver Healthcare Ministry
- Culmore Clinic
- Fauquier Free Clinic
- Free Clinic of Powhatan
- Goochland Cares
- Greene Care Clinic
- Guadalupe Free Clinic
- Health Brigade
- Ledwith-Lewis Free Clinic
- Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinics
- Ohlen R. Wilson Health Center
- ODU Community Care
- Page Free Clinic
- Shenandoah Community Health Clinic
- Sinclair Health Clinic
- St. Mary's Health Wagon

## HOW IT WORKS:

# Expanding Virginian's Access to Care

**VTMHI provides free teletherapy to patients served by Virginia's network of free and charitable clinics.**

- 1** Participating clinic identifies a patient in need of mental health supports.
- 2** Clinic refers patient to VTMHI and collaborates as patient's medical home.
- 3** VTMHI conducts assessment to ensure telemental health care matches patient needs.
- 4** Patient is matched with a volunteer therapist.
- 5** Therapist and patient agree on treatment goals (min. of 10 sessions provided).
- 6** VTMHI coordinates with referring clinic regarding care and social support needs.

## HOW IT WORKS:

# Strengthening the Mental Health Workforce

VTMHI is increasing the availability of mental health professionals by breaking down barriers to licensure. The program provides volunteers with free clinical supervision and client contact hours, along with the invaluable experience of serving people of different backgrounds in need of mental health services.

- 1 Pre-licensed mental health provider (pre-LMHP) applies to become a volunteer.
- 2 VTMHI matches pre-LMHP volunteer with (and pays for) clinical supervision based on learning and career goals.
- 3 Volunteer commits to at least six months of service.
- 4 Volunteer receives complimentary training in important topics like: telemental health best practices, working with the health care safety net, incorporating interpreters into therapy, and virtual safety assessment and planning.



SINCE VTMHI'S INCEPTION:

# Expanding Virginian's Access to Care

- **3.7K** teletherapy sessions scheduled.
- **300+** unique patients served
- **Multilingual** mental health visits implemented.
- **100% of patients** screened at a minimum with Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale, PHQ-9, GAD-7, and PRAPARE (SDOH Screening)

**SINCE VTMHI'S INCEPTION:**

# **Strengthening the Mental Health Workforce**

- **Ten clinical supervisors supported more than 50 pre-licensed mental health professionals**
- **Nearly two-thirds have committed as a volunteer to see patients for more than six months** (the minimum service expectation for VTMHI)
- **Two formerly pre-licensed mental health providers returned to volunteer once fully licensed.**

SINCE VTMHI'S INCEPTION:

# Strengthening the Mental Health Workforce

*"The experience of serving people of different backgrounds in need of mental health services has **reminded me why I enjoy doing what I do.** Participating in VTMHI has returned the vigor I needed to pursue my LCSW with much more enthusiasm."*

**– Zamir Bridgman, VTMHI Volunteer**

DURING VTMHI'S PILOT YEAR:

# Lessons Learned



**Patient complexity is greater than originally anticipated** thus requiring a higher level of care management.



**Even “low tech” telehealth options present challenges** for referring clinics, clients, and volunteers.



**Mental health treatment stigma is persistent** with this patient population. **No-shows and cancellations are true barriers** to continuity of care.

DURING VTMHI'S PILOT YEAR:

# Lessons Learned



The greatest area of need is **to serve Limited English Proficiency patients**. Referring clinics also need support with Medicaid patients.



**Pre-Licensed Mental Health Professionals (Pre-LMHP)** require more “**hands-on**” support with this patient population than they may require in other settings. Even activities such as screening, conducting assessments, and documentation require higher support than anticipated.

DURING VTMHI'S PILOT YEAR:

# Lessons Learned



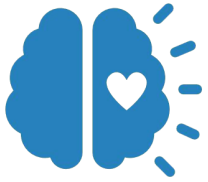
**There is a cultural learning curve with pre-LMHP from urban areas providing services to rural patients.** Supervisors and ongoing training help to bridge the gap.



**Many patients are new to mental health therapy.** Created patient education materials to help patients understand what to expect. Warm hand-offs between the referring clinic and our Patient Care Coordinators help ease the transition.

## 2024 Milestones

# VTMHI has accomplished major milestones, including...



Establishing itself as the **nation's first-ever statewide virtual free clinic** for mental health care.



Earned a **Gold Rating** from the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics Quality Standards Program – the highest rating for this program.



Selected to receive a **Mental Health Champion Award** from the Virginia Health Care Foundation.



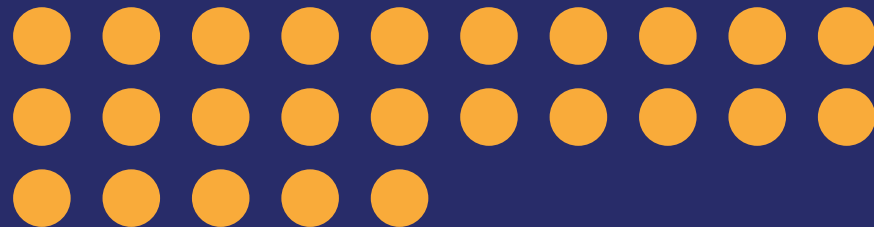
# Looking Ahead

## Seeking increased funding so VTMHI can focus on:

Safety planning supports for referring clinics, including enhanced regional safety planning and providing clinics with safety assessment protocols, training for their clinic staff and volunteers, and warm-line and emergent resources mapped across free and charitable clinic regions.

IN 2025, VTMHI AIMS TO...

Serve **35** free and  
charitable clinics





# Looking Ahead

## Seeking increased funding so VTMHI can focus on:

The expansion of multilingual services, including increased bilingual therapist recruitment, establishing partnerships with mental health interpreter training programs and peer specialists, and building a network of regional bilingual navigators.

IN 2025, VTMHI AIMS TO...

**Schedule over 5,000 telemental health sessions for 400 unique patients**

# Looking Ahead

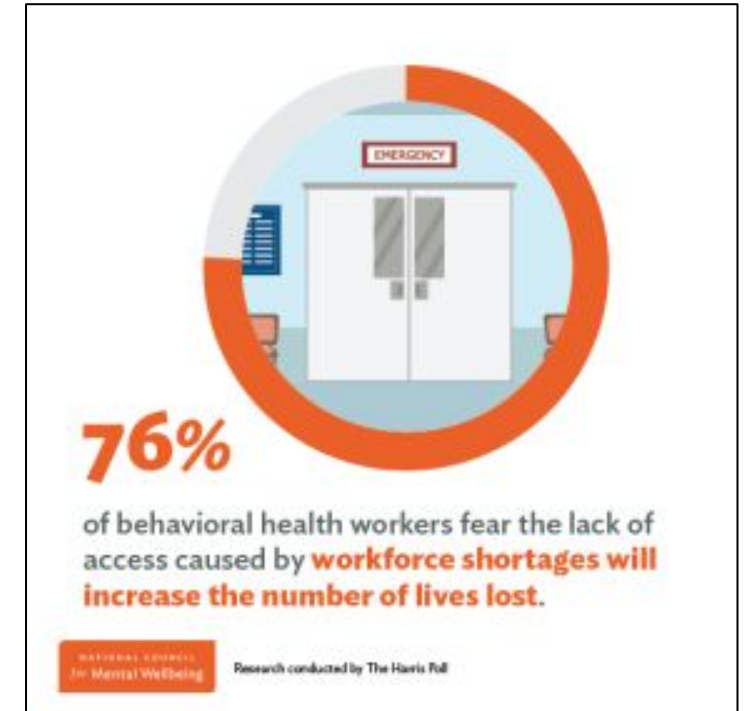
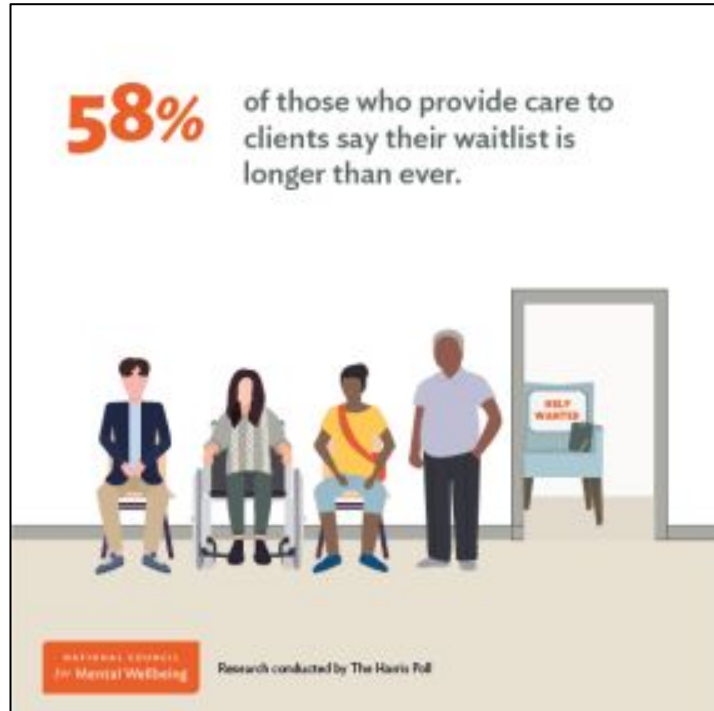
## Seeking increased funding so VTMHI can focus on:

The expansion of family-oriented therapy services, including therapy and supports for parents, marriage and family therapy, and Marriage and Family Therapy resident supervision

IN 2025, VTMHI AIMS TO...

**Maintain a roster of 50 active volunteers**

# Beyond Virginia



The research was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing among 750 behavioral health workers (defined as adults age 18+ who work in the mental health and substance use disorder treatment industry). The survey was conducted between February 3-19, 2023.

## More Telehealth Options

led the way in solutions to the challenges created by mental health and substance use treatment workforce shortages.

46%



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
for Mental Wellbeing

Research conducted by The Harris Poll



## Apprenticeship Programs

were a top choice for reducing the challenges created by workforce shortages in the mental health and substance use treatment field.

42%



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
for Mental Wellbeing

Research conducted by The Harris Poll



## Student Loan Forgiveness

was a leading solution for reducing the challenges in the mental health and substance use treatment field created by workforce shortages.

37%



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
for Mental Wellbeing

Research conducted by The Harris Poll

## For More Information:



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