



## Virtual Treatment and Training

*Polycom video helps deliver the highest quality mental health and substance abuse services to all Kansas residents, regardless of location*

Access to quality mental health and substance abuse care is an important part of any community infrastructure, but it can be a challenge to provide when many of the areas being served are in remote locations. That is why the 29 Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas created The Consortium, Inc., a not-for-profit administrative services organization. The Consortium oversees the mental health and substance abuse benefits for more than 100,000 Kansas residents by assessing their needs and then referring them to the best-suited Community Mental Health Center in their area. The organization also provides after-hours crisis intervention to more than 1 million people, almost one half of the state's population.

The Consortium implemented video communications several years ago thanks to a grant from a local foundation and state funding. The goal at that time was to use video to extend scarce clinical services from urban centers into hard-to-reach rural communities. Once the systems were up and running, however, the organization found myriad additional uses for them and the opportunity to provide broader access to care—while realizing significant cost savings.

"Not only have we seen tremendous cost reductions by eliminating the need for travel, but video also allows us to provide a greater number of patients with better access to the highest quality mental health and substance abuse treatment," says Marty Kennedy, chief financial officer for The Consortium.

### A Complete Solution

The Consortium found it needed to update its video technology and began an exhaustive vendor search. In the end, excellent customer service, superior video quality and the availability of an end-to-end solution made Polycom the clear choice.

"Our first implementation of video a few years ago had a revolutionary effect on the efficiency of our organization and on patient care, but the time had come to upgrade and take advantage of major advances in the communications industry," says Kennedy.

The Consortium deployed Polycom ViewStation® video communications systems in all of its Community Mental Health Centers, at remote locations and at its Topeka headquarters. It also relies on Polycom MGC™ multipoint control units (MCUs), which enable calls between multiple sites over any type of network.

"One of the most important selling points with Polycom was that it could offer us multipoint technology, in addition to the video conferencing systems," adds Kennedy. "With our initial point-to-point video deployment, we were able to offer our statewide training program at two different locations instead of just one. Now we'll be able to offer it at all 29 of our facilities, and that's got a lot of our staff excited."

Not only does Polycom MGC technology allow The Consortium to connect with multiple sites in the same call, it also helps save money on the high volume of multipoint calls that used to be facilitated by a service provider. By bringing the bridging in-house using the MGC MCUs, The Consortium has saved a significant amount of money. And the MGC system acts as a gateway, allowing The Consortium staff to seamlessly connect with anyone outside its network, like a physician who uses ISDN for video.

### Patients and Providers Win

The Consortium's use of video conferencing has resulted in increased efficiencies throughout the organization and benefits for both patients and providers. Video conferencing allows The Consortium's qualified professionals to meet with clients who are located in the many rural areas of Kansas without either party having to travel.

Polycom video conferencing systems also enable The Consortium to promote and facilitate professional development for its employees. By implementing a statewide training program over video, the organization has more frequent opportunities for training and saves money on travel time, time away from the office, gas, food and lodging.

In addition, The Consortium holds numerous executive-level administrative meetings each month. Holding these meetings over video is saving the organization precious time and money. Other state organizations, recognizing the value of The Consortium's network, have entered into agreements with the organization to "rent" time on the network for statewide meetings. This arrangement adds value to The Consortium's network and saves other organizations money as well.

### Expanding Telehealth

The Consortium sees tremendous possibilities for the use of video conferencing outside traditional mental health and substance abuse treatment. With the state budget under pressure, several state agencies and other service providers are considering affiliation with The Consortium's network. Schools and community hospitals also will become partners in teleconferencing.

"We have seen the financial and quality-of-care benefits that come with the use of video conferencing," says Kennedy. "We believe that more and more organizations will see our success and move forward with advanced networks of their own."