



Simplifying access to mental health care



Executive summary

Refresh Mental Health (Refresh) was founded in 2017 on the principles of promoting clinical excellence and simplifying consumer access to mental health care. Based in Jacksonville, Florida, Refresh was acquired by Optum in 2022. It provides outpatient care at more than 300 locations across 36 states and Washington, D.C., for mental illness, substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, trauma and other behavioral health concerns. Using the Optum® Patient Access and Engagement platform allows Refresh to provide 24/7 digital scheduling for its patients.

Optum Patient Access and Engagement

In February 2023, 2 Refresh provider groups went live with the Patient Access and Engagement platform, an online scheduling solution.

These groups included:

- Comprehensive MedPsych Systems (CMPS)
- Family Counseling Associates (FCA)

Combined, these practices represent 241 providers. Refresh will represent about 1,400 providers once online scheduling is fully implemented across 35-40 centers.

Today, 90% of Americans feel that the country is facing a mental health crisis.¹ Enabling digital access to behavioral health care is part of the Optum mission to help people live healthier lives and make the health system work better for everyone.



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Meeting the scheduling complexities unique to behavioral health provider groups

One of the key advantages of the Patient Access and Engagement platform is its seamless integration into the provider group's practice management system/electronic health record (EHR). It is also flexible in matching complex operational, clinical and practice management processes. Integrating directly into the EHR is essential for showing a provider's most up-to-date availability in an online scheduling tool.

While up to 80% of provider groups use EPIC, these Refresh practices instead use an EHR called PIMSY™. Additionally, each practice uses a different version of PIMSY with a large degree of EHR customization. Nevertheless, the Patient Access and Engagement platform was able to integrate with the practice EHR systems, allowing for the display of real-time provider availability.

Hitting all requirements for a simple, streamlined user experience

Beyond having a different EHR, Refresh provider practices had additional requirements when automating their appointment scheduling. The Patient Access and Engagement platform team worked closely with the Refresh centers to meet these complex protocols.

Some of these online scheduling requirements included:



Custom branding

The 2 centers under the Refresh umbrella, CMPS and FCA, each have separate branding and operate independently from each other. However, their visit reasons and patient experiences are the same.



Simplified and consistent visit reasons

Both practices used 60 visit reasons, causing patients to scroll through a long list of options before booking an appointment. Extensive visit reasons can confuse consumers and reduce conversions. Refresh asked Optum to narrow the list to 5 top-level visit reasons to improve the patient experience. All visit reasons have the same workflow questions, including questions that navigate users to an intake coordinator or provider.



Use of intake coordinators

Patients can't see the list of providers or coordinators until they complete all workflow questions. New patients must also complete a phone consultation with an intake coordinator before scheduling with a provider. The system hides the intake coordinator location in the listings to avoid confusion. New patients can only view intake coordinator schedules, while existing patients will see full provider availability.



Blended service model

The Patient Access and Engagement platform supports phone, telehealth and in-person visits. This is displayed in the scheduling view once a new patient has completed a phone consultation with an intake coordinator.

According to a recent Optum survey,² 72% of behavioral health care professionals stated they were not using online scheduling. Of those not using it, 27% state it was due to incompatibility with their EHR. Refresh and its affiliated clinics have demonstrated that integrating online scheduling with their unique EHR is not only possible, but effective for fast and simple booking of mental health visits.

100s of online appointments booked within weeks of launching

Behavioral health practices have been slow to adopt and find value in digital patient access technologies. In the Optum survey, 65% rated the ability to digitally schedule appointments as poor/not applicable at their practice.³

Refresh and its affiliated practices are bucking a low digital scheduling trend among behavioral health practices. Below are some of the key results that Refresh has achieved.⁴

987 total bookings during first 2 months being live



30% booking after hours



93% counseling/psychotherapy appointment



97% used a provider phone call as their appointment modality

While Refresh just started its journey moving toward digital patient access, early indications are that its efforts are increasing patient volume. Nearly 1,000 patients booked appointments online with Refresh within the first 2 months. About 3 in 10 patients scheduled their visits outside of normal business hours. The 24/7 availability of online scheduling served patients unable to contact the Refresh call center, resulting in more bookings.

Refresh providers conduct counseling and talk therapy via telehealth and in-office visits. The convenience of telehealth allows a larger percentage of patients to be served who otherwise may have not sought care due to location or transportation barriers. In fact, the Optum survey found 60% of providers selected the word Convenient when describing their overall experience using telehealth.²



The impact of no-shows

An unused appointment slot due to a patient no-show costs a provider group on average **\$200 per unfilled slot.**⁵

That means a clinic with 50 providers who each see 5 patients per day with 7% no-show rate (average for most practices) is losing **\$1.26 million** worth of revenue each year due to no-shows. Reducing a practice's no-show rate has a huge impact on the bottom line.

Optimize access to care

The Optum Patient Access and Engagement platform and Refresh Mental Health are breaking new ground when it comes to implementing digital technology for easier patient behavior health care access. If you'd like to learn how Optum can help your medical or behavioral health provider organization, complete the [Request a Demo](#) form and an Optum representative will schedule an overview.

If you would like to read more about our original research on behavioral health provider opinions and trends, [click here](#) and we will provide you access to the e-book.

Sources

1. McPhillips D. [90% of US adults say the United States is experiencing a mental health crisis, CNN/KFF poll finds](#). CNN Health. Oct 5, 2022.
2. Optum-sponsored survey: Behavioral Health Providers' Utilization of Online Scheduling Platforms. Survey included 250 behavioral health providers and health care professionals, fielded Oct.- Nov. 2022.
3. Ibid.
4. Data from DocASAP Insights dashboard for Refresh practices Family Counseling Associates (Feb.-March 28, 2023), and Comprehensive MedPsych systems (Feb.-March 28, 2023).
5. The True Cost of Patient No-Show Appointments. Intrado Healthcare, May 26, 2021.



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