



## **Mental Health Center of Denver’s Innovation Technology Lab marks first year with partnerships, staff-engaged projects & upcoming launch of You@Yourbest**

DENVER...December 1, 2020.....Last year, the Mental Health Center of Denver became the nation’s first – and only – behavioral health clinic to launch its own innovation lab. Innovation labs are more commonly associated with edgy companies that focus on bringing new ideas, products and services to market. Why did MHCD decide to “boldly go where no mental health center has gone” and launch an innovation lab?

According to Alires Almon, MHCD’s director of innovation, “MHCD’s Innovation Technology Lab may be unique in the mental health space, but we are tackling universal issues that impact the entire industry. I’m proud of our organization for recognizing that fast tracking technology and innovations can accelerate more equitable access to care.”

Almon, who was brought on board to run the Lab, believes the first year has been extremely fruitful. Through its Innovation Engine process, the Lab reviewed 30+ prospective innovations and projects and has six in production. Almon is especially pleased that two are ‘staff-engaged projects,’ meaning staff brought these ideas to the Lab. Noted Almon, “Innovation is a team sport.”

The staff-engaged projects include:

- **Evolution of Play: Minecraft Therapy Group** – Child & Family clinicians Braulio Rivera and Blake Lohman created a Minecraft replica of Dahlia Campus for therapy sessions for tweens. Participants meet virtually and engage in therapy while inside the Minecraft world. This project is being piloted by Allison Miller, Child and Family Program Manager.
- **PRISM project** – Developed through a partnership with Information Systems, Steve LeClair, and therapists in the Suicide Prevention Pathway Program. The tool will use machine learning to review clinical notes in Avatar to determine if a person served may benefit from the MHCD Suicide Prevention Pathway program. This project is being piloted by Anna Pham, Director of Enterprise System.

The Innovation Lab works with partners and entrepreneurs for the four remaining projects:

- **Road to Well-Being** – Piloted by Liz Hamel from the Engagement and Communications Organization (formerly Strategic and Community Partnership Organization). This effort is designed to do mobile community outreach and provide, education, awareness and innovative support services through a mobile vehicle. This project was put on hold.

- **CareSignal** – CareSignal is a remote patient monitoring company that partnered with MHCD to quickly provide accurate COVID-19 information to our community using COVID Companion. This effort is being led by Cathie Mclean and Steve Fisher.
- **Meru Health** – Funded through a grant from Colorado’s Office of eHealth Innovation, the Meru Health pilot compliments traditional services provided by MHCD with additional options, including online tutorials, biofeedback devices, group therapy, individual chat and talk sessions, and training in how to meditate, fall asleep and use breathing techniques to decrease anxiety.
- **Manatee** - Manatee is a digital platform that empowers mental health providers and families by integrating therapy into daily life. The platform empowers mental health providers and families by integrating therapy into daily life of the family.

Later this year, the Innovation Technology Lab will launch You@Yourbest, a new 24/7, online platform created to help people who are not in service but interested in improving well-being to set goals, explore personalized and curated resources and engage with MHCD.

“We believe You@Yourbest can significantly broaden our reach and help move the starting line forward for people who might need services,” said Almon.

Looking ahead, the Lab is focused on engaging more staff and supporting design-thinking mindsets, while further expanding the “Digital Front Door” to introduce MHCD to more people in the community.

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