

# Telehealth vendors are doubling down on mental health offerings—here's why they should focus on social health factors

Article

**The news:** Telehealth companies [Hims & Hers](#), a D2C multispecialty telehealth company, and [AbleTo](#), a virtual mental health company that personalizes treatment using data and analytics, both announced they'll be expanding their mental health offerings.

- **Hims & Hers** will be adding individual therapy to its suite of telehealth services.
- Meanwhile, **AbleTo** is upgrading its mental health platform to include two new features: **AbleTo Connect**, which acts as a digital clinical screener to better match patients to AbleTo services that meet their needs, and **AbleTo Therapy+**, which upgrades one-on-one therapy to include digital activities that support a patient's mental health progress.

**How we got here:** Mental health is the top use case for telehealth—and the pandemic put the value and utility of virtual mental health in the spotlight. Even now as telehealth visits [overall fall](#), telemental health visits are [holding steady](#).

- Unlike some medical specialties that require physical examination for accurate diagnoses and treatment, virtual therapy can be [as effective](#) as in-person —and in some [studies](#), it has even shown to be more effective.
- So, all the pandemic really did was force people who weren't already connecting with their mental health specialists virtually to do so, and they're now seeing these benefits first hand.
- We've seen usage skyrocket as a result: Telehealth claims for mental health spiked **6,500%** from January 2020 to February 2020, [per](#) LexisNexis'2021 COVID-19 Mental Health Impact report that analyzed over 2.2 billion medical claims.

**The problem:** Even though mental health became more accessible by removing geographic or physical barriers, telemental health doesn't solve issues many patients have when it comes to getting efficiently matched with a provider.

- **24%** of adults with a mental health condition report an unmet need for treatment—and that number hasn't gone down since 2011, [according to](#) Mental Health America's 2021 The State of Mental Health in America report.

**What's next?** To reach a wider population of consumers with mental health needs, telehealth providers can integrate services targeting social determinants of health (SDOH).

- SDOH like economic circumstances and physical environment can [predispose](#) individuals to mental illness. For example, studies have [found](#) that depression and anxiety are up to three

times more likely for those with low incomes. So, connecting social services with mental healthcare can potentially get more people to try telemental health.

- Mental illness can also exacerbate chronic physical conditions, and chronic conditions account for around **90%** of health care expenditures in the US, per the CDC. That’s important for telemental health vendors to keep in mind, considering many of their customers have a vested interest in keeping their employees/patients healthy to avoid growing healthcare costs.

