

Finding Mental Health Care: We've reduced the stigma...now what?

It's hard to say whether mental health concerns have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or the pandemic simply peeled back the layers to expose them. Either way, the demand for mental health services has sharply increased over the last few years. People are facing longer and longer wait times for in-person counseling, sometimes 6 weeks or more.

This surge in demand has pushed both patients and practitioners to further embrace alternatives to traditional face-to-face counseling. Virtual counseling isn't a new idea – in fact, online mental health care has been around nearly as long as the internet itself! What began as a way to reach remote and rural patients has become a popular alternative to in-person services - and for a variety of reasons. Improved accessibility, flexibility of scheduling, and the convenience of engaging with a mental health professional from a distance can help reduce wait times. At a time when local practices may not have early openings, people can access practitioners from across the state who may be able to help them sooner.



While it might seem like online therapy isn't as good as traditional face-to-face therapy, [research](#) shows that it can be just as effective. Video sessions allow counselors to observe the nonverbal cues and responses critical to assessment and treatment. Employees require only a webcam and software, which can be downloaded for free, to use this option. If video or in-person counseling is not possible or not appealing, counseling services can also be provided over the phone.

To help meet these needs for TXST employees, ComPsych® ([Bobcat Balance](#)) has created tools with flexibility and convenience in mind. Whether an employee is facing scheduling problems, suffering from an immobilizing illness or injury, or simply prefers the flexibility and accessibility of video and other online tools, ComPsych® ([Bobcat Balance](#)) offers a platform with many points of entry for accessing behavioral health services.

To learn more about your options, visit the [Bobcat Balance](#) website, or reach out to Employee Well-Being at wellbeing@txstate.edu.