

May 9, 2019

Survey of Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Clinicians

Kaiser patients are waiting longer for care, while a majority of mental health clinicians report that their next available appointments are more than a month away

In April of 2019, the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) administered a 10-question survey focused on the availability of mental health treatment appointments at Kaiser Permanente clinics in California.

Survey Highlights:

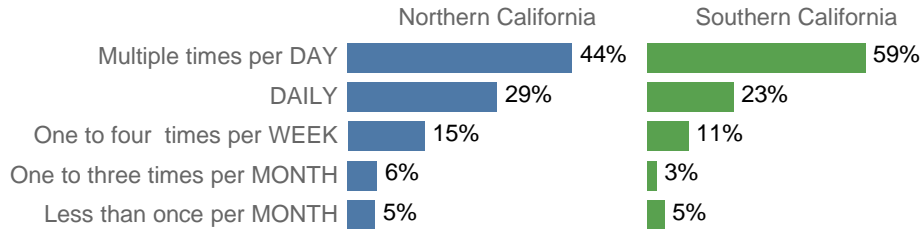
- 71% of respondents report that patients' wait times for treatment appointments have grown longer during the past two years.
- 77% of respondents report that on a daily basis, they must schedule their patients' return appointments further into the future than is clinically appropriate.
- 60% of respondents report that their earliest available return appointment is in more than four weeks. Many therapists' schedules are even more compromised. More than 25% report that their next available return appointment is more than two months away.
- 43% of therapists state that, on a daily basis, patients are being assigned to group therapy even though individual therapy may be more appropriate.
- 94% of therapists disagree with the following statement: "Weekly individual psychotherapy appointments at your clinic are available to those who need it."

The survey was sent to NUHW members throughout California who are employed by Kaiser as Psychologists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors. These therapists provide psychotherapy to children, adolescents, adults and families with diagnoses ranging from anxiety and depression to bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

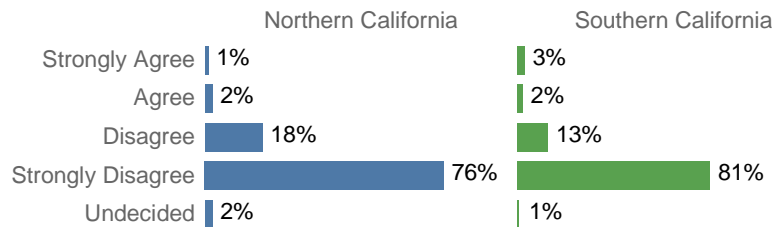
The survey findings illustrate that Kaiser Permanente's capacity to deliver clinically appropriate care to its enrollees is severely compromised. The problems are systemic and are not limited to subregions of the state. Kaiser, with nearly 9 million enrollees in California, is the state's largest HMO and the largest private provider of mental health services.

Highlighted Questions:

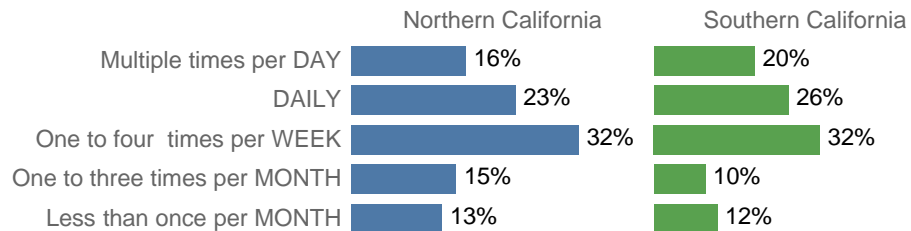
How often are you forced to schedule return visits further into the future than you believe is clinically appropriate?



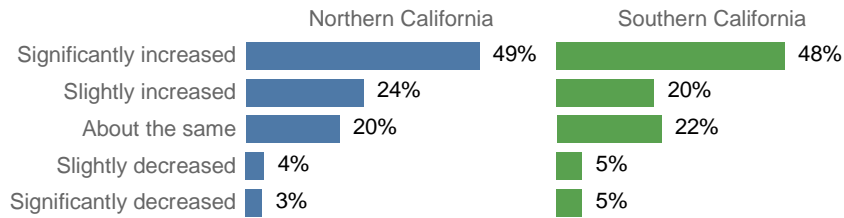
Weekly individual psychotherapy appointments at your clinic are available to those who need it:



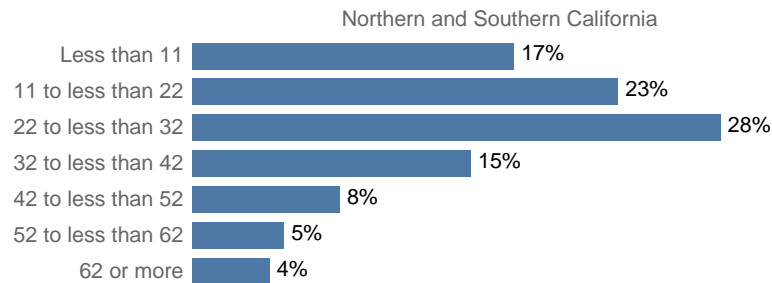
How frequently are patients assigned to group therapy even though individual therapy may be more appropriate?



To what extent have wait times for return appointments for your patients increased or decreased on average over the last 24 months?



In how many business days is your next available routine (non cancellation) return appointment? (write in number)



Survey Instrument & Methodology:

Using Qualtrics Research Suite, a web-based research platform, the survey was distributed electronically to each Kaiser therapist who provides individual or child/family psychotherapy in a Kaiser Psychiatry Department and for whom NUHW has a valid personal email. Each therapist who received the survey obtained a unique link for completion. For email delivery, the Qualtrics email sender was used, thereby allowing for progress tracking of specific clinicians. Individual responses are confidential and responses are only reported in aggregate form. Several security features were enabled prior to administration of the survey including, but not limited to, prevention of any respondent from taking the survey twice, “invitation-only” access to the survey (participants were required to click on the unique email link to access the survey), and time-window constraints for survey access.

The majority of the questions were presented in multiple choice format. One question was structured as open-response. Due to the regional nature in which Kaiser's services are delivered, a small portion of survey questions differed depending on a therapist's work region (Northern vs. Southern California).

Survey Response Rate:

The survey was delivered to 1,818 therapists at Kaiser clinics where mental health services are provided. Responses were received from 759 therapists, which represents a response rate of 42%.