

2019 Psychiatry Access Survey of Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Therapists in California

In April of 2019, the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) administered a 10-question survey focused on access to outpatient psychiatric appointments at Kaiser Permanente clinics. The survey was sent to NUHW members throughout California who are employed by Kaiser as mental health therapists (Psychologists, LCSWs, LMFTs, LPCCs, and Psychiatric RNs) and who provide psychotherapy to children, adults and families in a Kaiser Psychiatry Department.

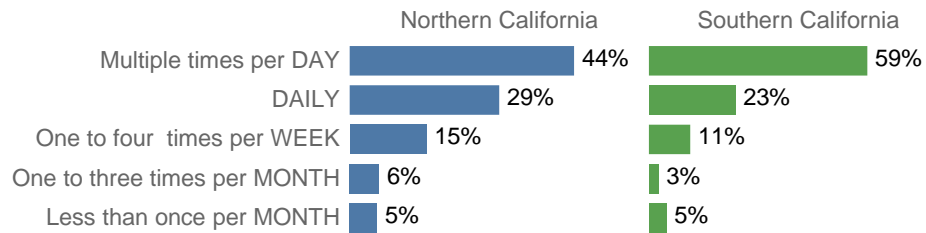
Survey Highlights:

- 71% of the respondents indicate that understaffing problems in their clinic have grown worse during the past 24 months. Specifically, they report that patients' wait times for treatment appointments have grown longer during the past two years.
- 94% of therapists disagree with the following statement: "Weekly individual psychotherapy appointments at your clinic are available to those who need it." Of this total, 78% *strongly disagree* with this statement.
- 77% of respondents report that on a daily basis, they must schedule their patients' return appointments further into the future than is clinically appropriate.
- Slightly more than half of the respondents had no individual return appointments available during the next 30 days. 60% of respondents report that their next earliest "available (non cancellation) return appointment" is in more than 21 business days. Many therapists' schedules are even more compromised. More than 1 in 4 of respondents report that their earliest "available (non cancellation) return appointment" is in 35 business days or more.

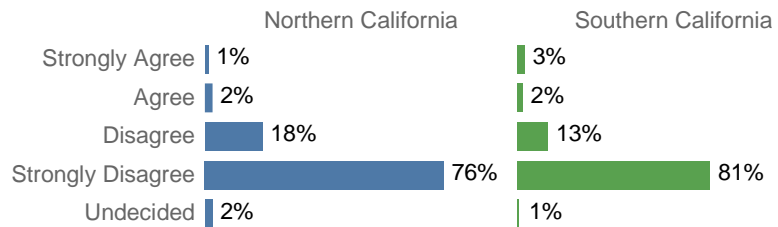
These findings, which come directly from the therapists who deliver care on a day-to-day basis, indicate that Kaiser's capacity to deliver clinically appropriate care to its enrollees is severely compromised. According to the results, the problems are systemic and are not limited to particular sub-regions of the state. In addition to reporting that patients' wait times for basic treatment appointments have grown worse during the past two years, 43% of therapists state that, on a daily basis, patients are being assigned to group therapy even though individual therapy may be more appropriate.

Psychiatry Access Survey – Highlighted Questions:

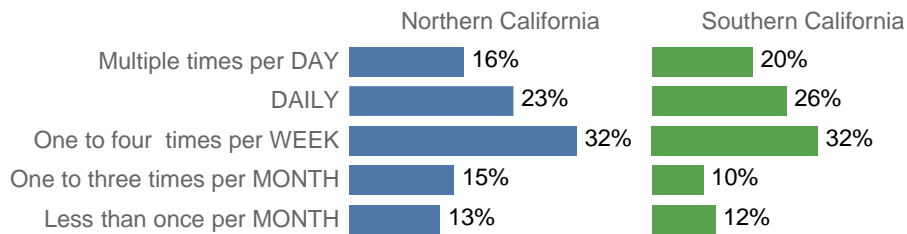
How often are you forced to schedule return visits further into the future than you believe is clinically appropriate?

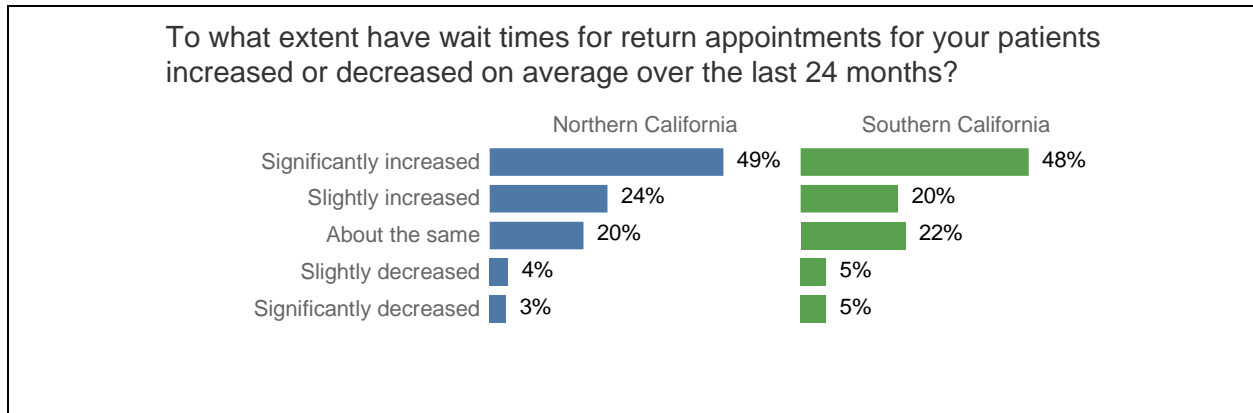


Weekly individual psychotherapy appointments at your clinic are available to those who need it:



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





Survey Instrument & Methodology:

Using Qualtrics Research Suite, a web-based research platform, the survey was distributed electronically to each Kaiser Permanente (KP) therapist member 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 here 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 form. One question was structured as open-response. Because of the regional nature in which KP services are delivered, a small portion of survey questions differed depending on a therapist’s work region (NCAL or SCAL).

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 translates into a response rate of 42%.