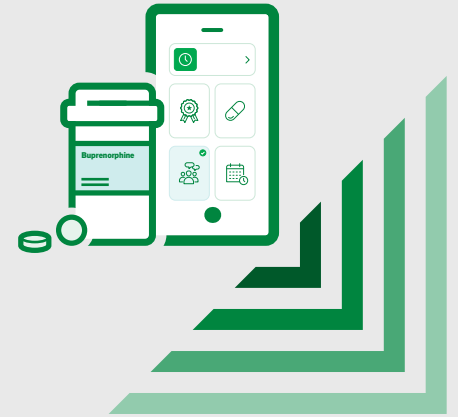


Virtual Opioid Use Disorder Solutions

HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT | SEPTEMBER 2025



Background on PHTI's Report on Virtual Opioid Use Disorder Solutions

Opioid use disorder (OUD) affects more than nine million adults in the United States, and nearly one in three adults have a family member who has struggled with this condition.¹ OUD is a chronic medical condition that changes how the brain works, making it very difficult to stop using opioids and to stay in treatment.

The most effective treatments for OUD are medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD).² These medications help reduce patients' desire for opioids and their likelihood of an overdose; however, only one in four adults who need such medications receive them.³

For patients with OUD, getting access to care can be complex and challenging. Many people with OUD experience difficulty finding a doctor who can prescribe these medications—and even with a prescription, some have trouble getting these medications from their local pharmacy. In addition, some people with OUD struggle to manage their treatment, because OUD treatment often involves multiple care providers and frequent appointments. These difficulties are especially hard for patients who may not have stable housing, reliable transportation, or a steady job. Finally, many people with OUD face judgment and stigma from others who do not understand that addiction is a medical condition.

Virtual solutions for OUD are technologies that are designed to help individuals to get OUD treatment and stay in it longer. These solutions can include virtual prescribing for medications, as well as such support services as therapy and group meetings. The Peterson Health Technology Institute (PHTI)—an independent nonprofit organization that conducts rigorous, evidence-based assessments of digital health tools—evaluated 16 virtual solutions for OUD to understand how well they work. For this assessment, PHTI looked at the clinical research and spoke with doctors, patients, and the companies that make these solutions. PHTI also conducted interviews with 10 patients with OUD who had experience with virtual solutions for OUD; patients were recruited for diversity across age, gender, race and ethnicity, income level, geography, and insurance type.

What PHTI Found

PHTI identified two types of virtual solutions for OUD:

- 1 Solutions that help connect patients to a virtual appointment for medications, treatment, and online support services.
- 2 Solutions that provide “wraparound” services to patients who are already getting MOUD through their doctor or at a treatment center.

PHTI found that both types of virtual solutions for OUD can help patients to stay in treatment slightly longer than other care options. These solutions can be helpful for (1) patients who need access to medications or (2) patients who would benefit from having additional virtual services on top of their existing treatment.

“ I didn't know where to go for doctors or clinics, and with insurance you never know what's covered.

The online program was so much easier—you could do it from home. They'd mail drug tests with app instructions on how to film it. Everything was much easier than going to a clinic weekly.”

—Patient Interview Participant

“ I think just the ease of treatment, you know, was such a big factor

in me continuing the program and having success with it.”

—Patient Interview Participant

What It Means for You

OUD treatment takes time and ongoing support, and may seem complex and overwhelming. Virtual solutions may make getting medications, attending appointments, and accessing support services easier and more flexible, as they can be accessed via a mobile phone.

If you are not currently getting MOUD, a virtual solution that provides medications might be a good option, especially if you live far from a treatment center, do not have access to transportation, or are not able to take time off of work for appointments. And if you are already getting medications from a doctor or clinic, solutions that offer extra support—like virtual support meetings or virtual therapy—may be helpful additions to your current care.

You can also share [PHTI's research](#) with your doctor to help them understand which solution may be the best option for you.

Costs

If you are ready for OUD treatment or your provider recommends a virtual OUD program, you may be able to access it through your insurance. Many insurance providers cover much of the cost of a virtual program. Some employers also offer these programs for low or no cost.

Accessing PHTI's Full Report

You can access the full report [here](#).



¹ KFF, “KFF Poll: Three-in-Ten People Say They or Someone in Their Family Has Been Addicted to Opioids, with Rural Families Hit Hardest,” August 15, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/other/press-release/kff-poll-three-in-ten-people-say-they-or-someone-in-their-family-has-been-addicted-to-opioids-with-rural-families-hit-hardest>

² SAMHSA, “Substance Use Disorder Treatment Options,” July 25, 2025. <https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/treatment/options>

³ Dowell, Deborah, Samantha Brown, Shiromani Gyawali, et al., “Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder: Population Estimates—United States, 2022,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 73 (2024): 567–574. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7325a1>