

FAQ's about FQHC's with Dr. Alex L. Andrade Jr.

Interviewed by Carrie Getz, Psy.D.

Alex L. Andrade Jr., Psy.D. currently works at WellSpace Health, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) in Sacramento. A FQHC receives federal funding, accepts patients with Medi-Cal, and provides treatment to individuals from underserved areas. Dr. Andrade works as part of an integrated treatment team to provide behavioral health services. He has worked in multiple primary care settings in California and Illinois and has particularly enjoyed working with individuals who receive services at FQHCs.



Q: What is the role of therapists as part of an integrated treatment team?

A: As a part of an integrated treatment team, therapists (referred to as integrated behavioral health clinicians or IBH clinicians) provide more brief, problem-focused treatment than traditional therapists. IBH clinicians work with medical providers who are treating patients in need of behavioral health treatment services, typically because they are suffering from a range of issues, such as depression, anxiety, trauma, health-related issues, and stress. Upon receiving a direct referral from a primary care physician, the IBH clinician conducts a “warm-handoff” in which the IBH clinician briefly meets with the patient to discuss services available, provide psychoeducation, schedule an appointment, and provided treatment interventions.

Q: Why is it important for therapists in private practice to know about FQHCs?

A: Although a FQHC will initially connect patients with IBH clinicians within the primary care clinic, the IBH clinician will likely need to refer some patients out into the community. Therefore, a FQHC may also be an excellent resource for referrals for therapists in private practice. A majority of patients who receive services from a FQHC have insurance through Medi-Cal. However, when a patient's health insurance changes, such as when they obtain employment, or if a patient is looking for a therapist with evening or weekend availability, therapists in private practice could be available to provide services to these individuals.

Q: Who's part of the integrated treatment team?

A: In addition to the IBH clinician, the integrated treatment team in a primary care clinic tends to consist of a range of different providers, including receptionists, medical assistants, primary care physicians, physicians assistants, nurse practitioners, social workers, substance abuse counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

Q: What's your favorite part about the work?

A: As an IBH clinician, I enjoy the variability. You never know what issues patients will be experiencing so you always have to be flexible and on your toes. As a Mexican-American psychologist, I also greatly enjoy working with individuals of diverse backgrounds because I get to introduce them to the benefits of behavioral health services while also challenging the stigma of having a mental illness and seeking treatment.