



Advancing Health Care Innovation and Excellence Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Integrating Clinical Psychology Training Programs Into Hospitals and Physical Health Systems

Lance Garrison, Ph.D.,
Dean of the College of Professional Psychology
The Chicago School

Index.

- 01** The Need for Integrated Care
- 02** Rationale for Integrated Behavioral Health
- 03** Training the Next Generation of Clinical Psychologists in Integrated Care
- 04** The Chicago School and the Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine: A National Model
- 05** Benefits for Health Care Systems and Academic Institutions
- 06** Strategic Recommendations for Leaders
- 07** References



The Need for Integrated Care

The U.S. health care system is undergoing a profound transformation. Rising rates of chronic disease, growing mental health needs, and the move toward value-based care demand new ways of thinking about how we train the health care workforce (Williams et al., 2016). Despite these evolving demands and calls for integrated training, psychological care in many settings remains structurally and operationally separated from physical health care. This fragmentation limits the ability to provide comprehensive treatment and leads to missed opportunities for prevention, early intervention, and coordinated care.

The Chicago School addresses this gap through a bold, nationwide approach: embedding Clinical Psychology training programs directly within hospitals, primary care practices, and health systems. Students learn and serve in integrated environments where they collaborate with medical teams to treat the whole person.

This leadership is further advanced through the opening of our Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine (IllinoisCOM), which will feature a distinctive mind-body medicine curriculum. Medical students will train alongside clinical psychology students, engaging in shared

learning experiences in patient care, interprofessional teamwork, and the application of integrated health principles.

This model not only prepares psychologists to work effectively in medical settings but also equips future physicians — particularly those entering primary care — with the skills to recognize, assess, and respond to behavioral health needs that are commonly present in medical practice. Through this collaborative training approach, both professions will be better prepared to deliver holistic, patient-centered care.

The Chicago School addresses the gap in health care providers through a bold, nationwide approach:

Embedding Clinical Psychology training programs directly within hospitals, primary care practices, and health systems.



Rationale for Integrated Behavioral Health

Addressing the Mental Health Crisis



Each year, nearly one in five U.S. adults experiences mental illness, yet almost 60% receive no treatment (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2023). Behavioral health concerns are present in more than 60% of primary care visits (Schrager, 2021). Without integrated services, these needs often go unaddressed, worsening outcomes for patients with co-occurring medical conditions.

Evidence-Based Benefits of Integration



Research consistently shows that integrated care works. Programs have documented a 59% reduction in anxiety and a 32% reduction in depression, along with improved chronic disease management (American Hospital Association, 2019). Patients and caregivers report improved experiences, greater adherence to treatment, and fewer emergency visits (Gavaldà-Espelta et al., 2023; Will et al., 2019). These outcomes represent not only better care for individuals but also more efficient and sustainable health systems overall (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Training the Next Generation of Clinical Psychologists in Integrated Care

As a national leader in integrated health education, The Chicago School prepares future clinical psychologists to excel in diverse health care environments. Through a robust network of placements across the country, our students train in hospitals, primary care practices, community health centers, and specialty clinics. These settings expose them to a wide variety of patient populations, medical conditions, and care delivery models, ensuring their skills are both comprehensive and adaptable.

The integration models in which The Chicago School students train are not short-term pilots, but established, ongoing collaborations that prove integrated care is scalable, adaptable, and sustainable.

Training in these environments means more than simply understanding integrated care — it means practicing it every day. Students learn to collaborate seamlessly with physicians, nurses, and other health care providers, addressing behavioral health needs as they arise in medical settings and contributing directly to patient care.

Their preparation emphasizes real-time patient engagement, including conducting behavioral health assessments during medical visits, providing brief evidence-based interventions, and offering immediate support to patients and families. They also gain experience in care coordination, working closely with interdisciplinary teams to ensure patients receive follow-up services.

This approach produces graduates who are clinically skilled, culturally responsive, and fully prepared for the complexities of modern health care. These partnerships extend the impact of training into the communities we serve, particularly historically underserved and underrepresented populations who often face the greatest barriers to coordinated behavioral and physical health care.

The Chicago School's commitment to the community was recently recognized with a Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement.





The Chicago School and The Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine:

A National Model

With the launch of IllinoisCOM, The Chicago School strengthens its position as a leader in integrated health care education. The medical curriculum emphasizes mind-body medicine, preparing future osteopathic physicians to value and integrate behavioral health into their practice.

1

Shared Understanding

Develop a shared understanding of patient care that recognizes the inseparable connection between mental and physical health.



2

Real-World Experience

Gain real-world experience in team-based care before entering independent practice.



3

Lead Interdisciplinary Initiatives

Learn to lead interdisciplinary initiatives that improve quality, equity, and access in health care.



Benefits for Health Care Systems and Academic Institutions

Integrated behavioral health models create meaningful value for both health care systems and the academic institutions that train the next generation of clinicians. A key component of these partnerships is the inclusion of clinical psychology trainees within care teams. Under appropriate supervision, trainees expand the capacity of health systems by supporting behavioral health screening, brief interventions, patient education, and care coordination that are essential to whole-person care.

This additional workforce capacity helps health care organizations address growing behavioral health needs, improve patient outcomes, and operate more efficiently within value-based care environments. At the same time, higher education institutions benefit by placing students in real-world clinical settings where they gain hands-on experience in integrated care, strengthening workforce readiness and building sustainable training pipelines that support both the health system and the broader community.

Advancing Integrated Care Through Strategic Partnerships and Innovation

- Approaching integrated care implementation through proactive strategies strengthens collaboration, sustainability, and regulatory alignment.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration is strengthened through structured interprofessional education and leadership support for team-based care. Students and faculty from multiple disciplines engage in shared training experiences that build mutual understanding of professional roles and foster effective collaboration in clinical settings.
- Sustainable funding models are supported by identifying diverse funding streams, including federal grants, community partnerships, and value-based reimbursement arrangements. These efforts are reinforced through data demonstrating the clinical and economic value of integrated care.



Strategic Recommendations for Leaders

To expand integrated care's impact, we recommend that health care executives and policymakers:

- 1 Advocate** for funding and policy incentives that support behavioral health integration across all care settings.
- 2 Invest** in interdisciplinary training infrastructure that bridges clinical psychology and medicine.
- 3 Develop** scalable, adaptable models that can be implemented in varied health care environments.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The integration of Clinical Psychology training programs within health systems is not a theoretical vision; it is a proven, practical approach that The Chicago School is advancing every day in communities nationwide (Wahass, 2005, Kwan, et. al., 2015). With the Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine, we are creating a new generation of health care professionals equipped to lead in integrated, patient-centered care.

We invite health care leaders, policymakers, and academic partners to join us in building a future where every patient receives care for both mind and body in a single, coordinated system.

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Start the Conversation

Discover how integrated mental health could look at your organization and develop the scalable, adaptable model most appropriate for your institution. Connect with The Chicago School.



Lance Garrison, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Professional Psychology
lgarrison@thechicagoschool.edu



thechicagoschool.edu/our-approach