

Tech to bring doctors, patients together

Gulf Bend Center expanding tele-video conference abilities

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GOLIAD – The picture on the screen is sharp, the audio crisp and clear.

The tele-video conference between the Gulf Bend Mental Health and Mental Retardation Center in Victoria and the courthouse annex in Goliad went off without a glitch.

In the coming weeks, Center patients in several locations outside of Victoria will be visiting their doctors via the tele-video technology.



"This technology works. The experience we have had doing this on a limited basis is that our patients like it and our physicians see it as efficient. It doesn't compromise quality," said Don Polzin, Gulf Bend Center executive director.

Representatives from the center demonstrated the system Thursday morning with county judge Harold Gleinser, Gulf Bend Center board member Shirley McMillan of Fannin, and the county's two justices of the peace, Steve Kennedy and Sylvia Arriazola in attendance. Polzin was at the Goliad end of the hook-up and David Way, the center's director of operations, carried the bulk of the conversation from Victoria.

The system has been used at the Victoria County Jail for about three years and on a more limited basis at Memorial Medical Center in Port Lavaca and at the Gulf Bend Crisis Respite Center in Cuero. Now it will be expanded to Goliad County and other locations.

"We don't have free-standing clinics in the region, so our intent is to extend our services at a time when it's really critical and people do not have to drive to access our services," Polzin said. "It will also save money not having to put doctors on the road."

The Goliad county judge said renovations at the courthouse annex have been approved and Gulf Bend will have a private clinic office to

conduct the tele-video conferences. Specific clinic times will be established and a Gulf Bend case manager and nurse will be on hand.

"If we have someone who thinks their family member or a deputy that thinks someone needs to be seen by Gulf Bend, we can come down here and have that initial contact and not have to go to Victoria," said Gleinser.

Way added that law enforcement, too, will play a factor in use of the technology. The use of the tele-video system also keeps deputies from being tied up transporting prisoners to and from appointments at Gulf Bend Center.

"We'll be working with law enforcement to develop protocols for how to use this equipment. Once we move to our new facility, we'll be setting up one of these units in the Crisis Services Department," Way said. "It's an economical efficient way to bring traditionally very expensive services into your community."

Gulf Bend Center is moving to the Regional Medical Plaza and should be relocated by November.

The equipment is funded in part by a \$98,600 grant from the Meadows Foundation, a Dallas-based philanthropic group that works to improve the quality life in Texas.

Gulf Bend Center tele-video locations:

Victoria County Jail

Refugio County Hospital

Lavaca Medical Center, Hallettsville

Memorial Medical Center, Port Lavaca

Gulf Bend Crisis Respite Center, Cuero

Goliad County Annex Building

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