

2023 Buyers Guide:

Best Solutions for Patient Engagement



Discover the top patient engagement solutions with our 2023 Buyers Guide. Make informed decisions for better healthcare outcomes.

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Introduction:

The Problem with Patient Engagement

If your healthcare organization is struggling with keeping patients engaged, you're not alone. According to a recent survey, 55% of healthcare leaders said integrating patient engagement capabilities was a high priority for the coming year¹. However, 71% of responding provider organizations had limited to no integration of patient engagement capabilities. Additionally, 58% of leaders said disjointed patient experiences were among their most pressing challenges.

But why do healthcare organizations need to prioritize patient engagement in the first place? Put simply, enabling patients to be more involved in their healthcare journey can improve their health outcomes and increase patient satisfaction². When patients are satisfied with their care, they are more likely to continue using the facility's services, increasing revenue. Improving patient engagement also allows healthcare providers to make better clinical decisions and spend more time delivering care.

As the healthcare landscape evolves, so does the way patients engage with their healthcare. Patients want the same convenience they have with other industries. Today, consumers can get groceries delivered at the push of a button or pay a bill online. They expect the same experience in the healthcare industry as well. That means organizations will need to be able to implement patient engagement capabilities or get left behind.

Over the course of this buyer's guide, you'll learn about the common pain points many healthcare organizations face when it comes to patient engagement, including:



Missed appointments



Uncollected medical bills



Data privacy and security

You'll also learn how patient engagement technology can:

- ✓ Relieve the administrative burden on healthcare staff
- ✓ Reduce burnout
- ✓ Improve provider satisfaction and retention



By the end of this guide, you'll also understand the KPIs to measure patient engagement in your organization, as well as the key features to look for in a patient engagement platform.

Common Pain Points for Providers and Healthcare Organizations, and Their Solutions

While there are areas where patient engagement can be improved throughout the patient journey, several points along the way are especially troublesome for many healthcare organizations and individual providers. Many of these challenges can be solved with patient engagement software. When it comes to making buying decisions, healthcare organizations should consider their [pain points](#) and evaluate whether the patient engagement software will address them or not.

Healthcare facilities should also consider the value of implementing the software. Because technology can represent a significant investment, it's important to ensure an ROI. Not only should the software help reduce costs for patients and providers, but it should also help save time. Although this is difficult to determine prior to actually implementing the software, healthcare organizations should be aware of the KPIs they are trying to improve and have a plan in place to measure them before and after software implementation. Here are some common problems healthcare organizations face with patient engagement and how technology can help.





What Can We Do About Missed Appointments?

Nearly 30% of patients miss scheduled appointments. Missed appointments cost the healthcare industry around \$150 billion in lost annual revenue³. Even a one-physician private practice can expect to lose approximately \$150,000 per year due to patient no-shows.

Active appointment management can drive down no-show rates. Most healthcare facilities use human labor for this. They assign staff members to call patients and remind them about their upcoming appointments, as well as to take incoming calls from patients who need to schedule or reschedule an appointment. But this method is labor-intensive and can be frustrating for both patients and staff members.

Technology can help lower missed appointment rates. Mend allows patients to self-schedule and self-reschedule appointments as needed, with just a few clicks. A reduction in no-shows—and therefore increased patient attendance—can also improve patient flow throughout the practice. With self-scheduling, as well as the option for virtual visits, patients are more likely to be on time for their appointment. This helps keep staff members on schedule and reduces the likelihood of double booking which can cause providers to see fewer patients.

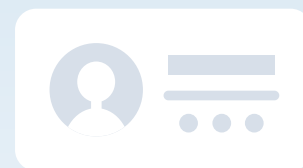


How Can We Maintain Patient Engagement Across Departments?

Many larger healthcare organizations care for all of a patient's needs, across several different departments and even facilities. For example, a patient might see a primary physician in a branch office near his home but travel to a larger campus for lab tests and scans. Once a year, he visits a cardiologist on yet another campus, and a podiatrist in a small office the next town over.

Patient engagement may be excellent at each of these individual facilities. But if they all run on their own legacy patient management systems, the individual's journey will not be smooth. Cross-departmental communications may become lost or confused. The patient might need to repeat tasks, such as providing insurance information, at every facility, and medical records may or may not follow the patient to each new location. As a result, patients may become confused or frustrated, and even decide to drop out of the process. In addition, the risk of providers or staff members making mistakes goes up.

The best solution to this issue is to bring the entire healthcare organization into a trustworthy, cloud-based platform that supports electronic health records (EHRs). This ensures that patient records are readily available at any location, minimizes the chances for errors, and keeps patient engagement high throughout the entire healthcare journey.

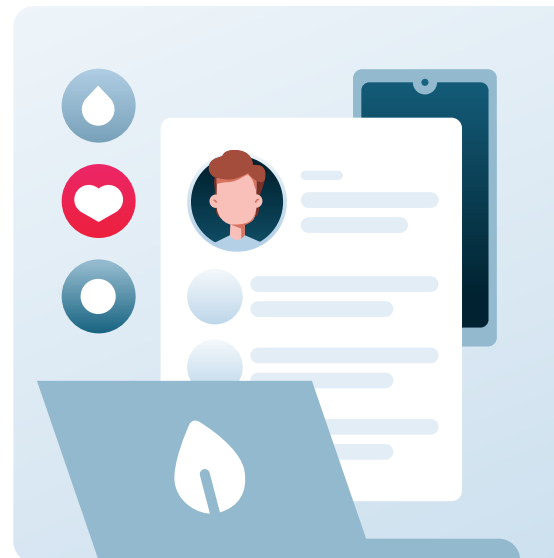




Both Patients and Staff Are Complaining About Our Intake Forms. How Can We Improve Them?

In a world of on-demand meal deliveries and ridesharing, pen-and-clipboard intake forms seem archaic. They can be confusing, take a long time to fill out, and leave patients sitting in waiting rooms for far longer than they would like. And then someone has to manually input all of that data into the organization's system, introducing the possibility for both mistakes and data privacy issues.

Digital intake forms can solve this dilemma. Offices can send them out in advance, allowing patients to complete them at their leisure, from any digital device. These forms boost patient engagement, protect personal data, and reduce errors. Most importantly, they work. In fact, 68% of patients return these forms within an hour, while 75% return them within a day.



How Can We Maintain HIPAA Compliance and Patient Data Security?



Patient engagement relies on trust. People feel more engaged when they are comfortable that their data is protected. And federal regulations around patient health data are tight, with severe penalties for breaches. Organizations that aren't using the latest secure platforms face cybersecurity risks that could lead to lost revenue and shattered patient trust.

Many data breaches occur when well-meaning staff members accidentally provide access to a bad actor. This could be as simple as leaving a paper intake form lying around or as complex as falling for a sophisticated phishing attack. In addition to a secure platform and tight access controls, healthcare organizations must invest in staff screening and training.



We're Having Trouble Collecting Payment from Our Patients. Can You Help?

A. [Past-due medical bills](#) are only becoming more of a problem as healthcare costs continue to rise.

In fact, U.S. healthcare spending rose to **an eye-popping \$4.1 trillion in 2020**,



and roughly **one in 10 American adults is carrying medical debt**.



About **11 million people owe more than \$2,000**



and approximately **3 million owe more than \$10,000⁴**.

One of the biggest problems is a mismatch between the type of billing most patients want, and the type of billing most healthcare facilities are using. In fact, roughly 75% of healthcare facilities still send paper bills, but 74% of patients prefer online billing and payment options. Many patients would prefer to simply keep a credit card on file to pay the bill when it becomes due

But there are other billing issues as well. In particular, patients tend to complain about surprise bills, unclear paperwork that doesn't specify how much they need to pay, and the possibility of billing errors.

Boosting patient financial engagement is crucial to increasing overall patient engagement. Tools that can help include:



Uncollected medical bills



Preservice screening that includes an explanation of financial responsibility



Digital billing with online payment options



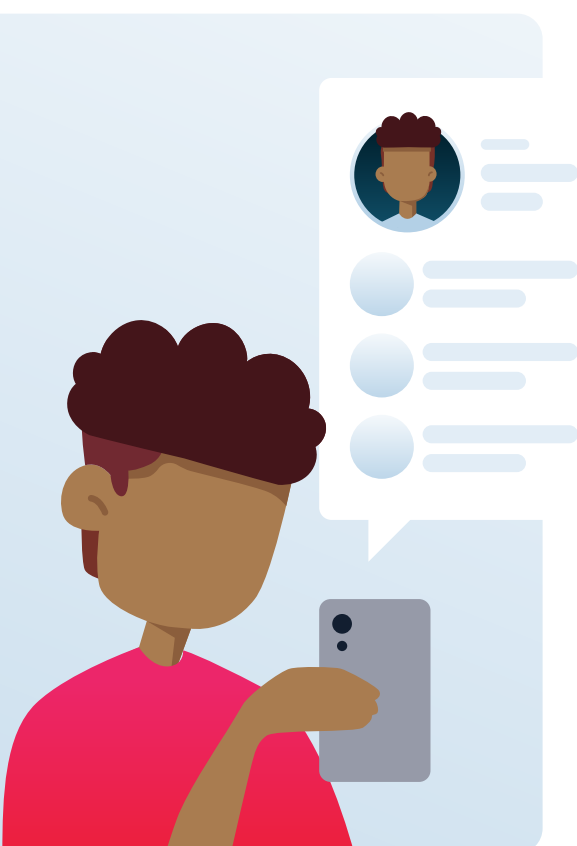
Offering these three things can help healthcare organizations get paid faster and with less effort, while also reducing the risk of losing patients to a different provider.

How Can Telehealth Platforms Improve the Patient Cycle?

Telehealth was already available before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the global shutdowns led to the rapid adoption of this technology. By April 2020, most provider visits were virtual and telehealth platforms were seeing incredible spikes in growth.⁵

Although the world has long since reopened and in-person visits are readily available, telehealth remains a powerful option for patients, providers, and healthcare facilities. Telehealth helps to remove barriers to care, such as lack of access in rural areas and mobility considerations. Telehealth helps healthcare organizations extend their geographic coverage, which can be especially important in areas that have physician shortages⁶. It can also enable patients to get care they might not have had access to otherwise. For example, some areas might have a significant dearth of specialists, meaning patients might have to travel to other cities or even states for specialty care. Telehealth makes it possible for patients to see a specialist in the comfort of their own homes.

In addition, telehealth can vastly improve the patient journey by smoothing many of the common sticking points for patient engagement. Imagine the patient cycle [looks something like this:](#)



Pre-Visit



Patients self-schedule their own appointments. If a conflict arises, they simply reschedule. This process can actually drop the no-show rate into the low single digits. Patient self-scheduling can also boost patient volume by attracting new patients and removing barriers to booking an appointment.



The patients complete digital intake forms well before their scheduled appointment. Completion rates average approximately 86%, and many forms are returned within an hour.



Patients check in via a simple, easy link and pay their co-pays. They can see all of their billing details and even keep a credit or debit card on file for easier payments.



While waiting for the visit to begin, patients have access to a Netflix-style collection of educational videos.

During the Visit



Real-time translation, including for American Sign Language (ASL), removes barriers to communication between patients and providers. HIPAA-compliant devices can also use real-time natural language captioning for patients who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Natural language processing technology and automatic transcription reduce manual clinical documentation, which is a huge burden on practitioners. This technology allows providers to focus solely on providing the best possible care to each patient.



A phone dialer makes connecting to on-demand translation services easy and frictionless. Translators, remote scribes, or other third parties can quickly be dialed into the visit directly from the platform. If connectivity is low, integrated dial-up can be used as a backup.



Post-Visit



Automated payment processing determines the patient's financial responsibility and either charges the card on file, issues a digital bill, or allows the patient to set up a payment plan. An integrated payment and patient engagement solution let the billing department know if payment has not been collected, freeing up staff. It also reduces the need to sell uncollected payments to debt collectors for pennies on the dollar.



The patient receives appropriate aftercare instructions and follow-up appointment reminders.



Throughout every stage of the journey, the platform encourages open communication between patients and providers. Secure digital messaging keeps a record on file while ensuring that patient privacy is protected.



What to Look for in a Telehealth Platform to Boost Patient Engagement

It is clear to see that telehealth platforms can offer tremendous benefits for patients, providers, and healthcare organizations. A strong platform integrates seamlessly with existing electronic health records (EHRs) and patient management systems (PMSs). Even when patients choose in-office care, they can take advantage of many of the platform's benefits, such as self-scheduling and digital intake forms.

But not all telehealth platforms are the same. To make the most of technology's ability to boost patient engagement, organizations need to focus on some key feature sets before making a buying decision.



Emerging Trends

Technology evolves rapidly, and there are always new trends on the horizon. A strong telehealth platform embraces current trends and is well-positioned to incorporate new trends as they emerge. Today, one of the biggest trends in patient engagement is the use of [artificial intelligence](#) (AI) and machine learning.

Machine learning adapts to your patients' actual behavior patterns to create engagement touchpoints that are appropriate for them. For example, some patients are more likely to miss an appointment than others. Patients at high risk of no-shows receive more frequent appointment reminders with different wording than those who nearly always make it to their appointments.

One of the most exciting new uses for AI is in collecting patient vital signs. Rather than a manual process involving a nurse, tech, or another provider, getting vitals is now as simple as the patient using the webcam on any device. Healthcare facilities can collect vitals during the digital check-in process or while the patient is waiting for the appointment to begin.

In the future, AI will likely assist with predictive care. Imagine a world in which providers can predict with a high degree of accuracy who is likely to develop specific illnesses, based on not only global risk factors but personal behavior patterns. AI may even help to predict which course of treatment is likely to be the most successful for an individual patient.

Of course, artificial intelligence is not the only emerging trend in patient engagement or in telehealth as a whole. Telehealth platforms need to be nimble, flexible, and able to incorporate the latest evidence-based best practices.

Support for Changing Telehealth Policies

Another consideration when choosing a telehealth platform is how well it can adapt to [changing policies surrounding telehealth](#). When the global pandemic hit, many long-standing regulations were loosened in order to facilitate safely distanced healthcare delivery. As the pandemic declaration ends, a lot of things are likely to change quickly. From billing and coding considerations to the circumstances under which in-person visits are required, healthcare organizations will need to ensure that they remain in compliance.

A robust, cloud-based telehealth platform is well-positioned to help organizations keep up with changing telehealth policies. Choose a platform that prioritizes regulatory compliance and keeps its customers in the loop about upcoming changes. It should also provide technological backstops against the provider, staff, or patient behaviors that are no longer acceptable.



Patient Engagement KPIs

There are numerous telehealth platforms currently on the market. How can decision-makers for healthcare organizations determine which is best suited to meet their patient engagement needs? Like any data-driven decision, leaning on key performance indicators (KPIs) can help ensure the right decisions. [KPIs for telehealth and digital patient engagement](#) include:



No-Show Rates

The national average for missed appointments is 23%. When patients are engaged in their healthcare journey, though, this can drop into the single digits. While many healthcare organizations use employees to manage patient appointments, using a system like Mend can free up resources while encouraging patients to become more involved in the process. Look for a platform that drives engagement through self-scheduling, self-rescheduling, and customized automated appointment reminders.



Wait Times

Whether patients are in a physical waiting room or a virtual one, no one likes to sit around. Many facilities offer magazines and televisions to pass the time in person, but few telehealth platforms have much for patients to do while they wait. In general, the average wait time for a telehealth platform is 15 to 20 minutes. Some platforms, like Mend, are able to reduce these even more. And on Mend, patients can pass the time watching stock or customized educational videos. This helps to boost patient engagement even while waiting.



Contact Profile Health

Healthcare providers must measure and monitor the quality of patients' contact information. Not having the correct information on record can increase the risk of no-shows. It's important to look at appointment records for contact information, such as a phone number or email address, and then check for deliverability issues. More than 98% of patients on Mend have valid contact information.



Patient Interactions

The best technology in the world does no good if patients don't choose to use it. On a platform such as Mend, it's easy to track how many times each patient interacts with the system throughout their healthcare experience. Are they self-scheduling appointments? Responding to appointment reminders? Utilizing the resources in the virtual waiting room? Do they pay their digital bills promptly?

Patient Satisfaction

This is a key metric for any healthcare organization. Satisfied patients tend to become loyal patients who will remain with the organization long-term. Patient surveys are typically the best way to determine satisfaction. Send these out as soon as possible after each visit, either through the platform directly or by automated text message.

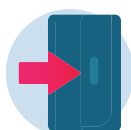


Questions to ask include:

- ✓ How easy was it to schedule (and re-schedule if needed) your appointment?
- ✓ Did you feel like your provider answered all of your questions?
- ✓ How were your interactions with the staff and with the platform?
- ✓ Was the technology easy to use?
- ✓ Was it convenient?
- ✓ Is there anything you would like us to know?

Successful Visits

A successful visit is divided into three sections: the pre-visit, the actual visit, and the post-visit. At each step, you can use metrics to track success.



Pre-Visit. Are patients actually using the platform to schedule and re-schedule appointments? Do they respond to automated appointment reminders? Are they digitally checking in for their visits?



Visit. Are patients actively engaging with their providers? Are providers offering educational materials to help patients understand their condition? Is there a team mentality in which the provider and the patient work together to achieve success?



Post-Visit. Does digital check-out run smoothly? Do patients return to the platform to access educational materials and other information regarding their condition? Do they pay their bills quickly?

Provider Adoption

Provider adoption is key to any successful healthcare platform. If provider adoption rates are low, it is worth finding out why. Track provider usage within the system, and also send out surveys on a regular basis. Are they using the platform? Do they find it easy to use and helpful? Is there anything they would change? And importantly, have they heard any complaints about it from their patients?

Taking the time to ask these questions can help healthcare organizations improve provider satisfaction and retention with patient engagement software. When making a buying decision, organizations want to look for platforms that have a high satisfaction rate. Mend has a 93% provider satisfaction rate (4.64/5), as well as a 98% provider retention rate after ~20 telehealth visits.

Ensuring ease of use is critical to improving provider adoption. If providers have trouble finding the information they need or if the software is burdensome to use, they are not going to use it. Not only does this hurt the organization's ROI on the software, but it also means more time and money will need to be spent on finding a replacement.

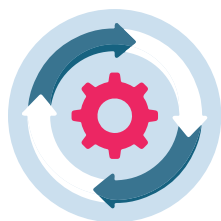
Telehealth can also reduce burnout and improve provider satisfaction. Administrative tasks such as scheduling appointments and collecting payments are some of the main contributors to provider burnout. A patient engagement platform can automate some of the administrative tasks that providers used to perform manually. Not only does that help reduce burnout, but it also reduces the risk of errors due to manual data entry.

Improving provider satisfaction is something telehealth can help with. It allows them to work from home or another location, which can improve work/life balance. Telehealth also allows healthcare organizations to widen their applicant pool outside of the local market for job openings, which can help reduce the burden on existing staff.



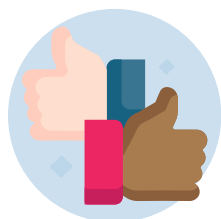
Additional Considerations

Beyond KPIs, there are several features to consider that could ultimately make or break a telehealth and patient engagement platform. These include:



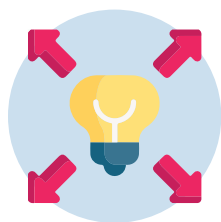
Customizable workflows.

Not every patient appointment requires exactly the same workflow. A robust platform allows organizations to set up the workflows that are best for their needs, including the ability to maintain multiple workflows for different uses. Customizable workflows can also improve patient throughput from arrival to post-visit. They can replicate the flow of an in-office visit for virtual visits, making the transition seamless while also keeping the familiarity of in-person encounters.



Connection quality.

There are massive technology disparities across the country and around the world. In the U.S., connectivity issues are especially prevalent in rural communities with limited access to broadband internet. The strongest telehealth platforms understand this dilemma and offer fallback options such as video capability on 3G and audio-only connections. Mend can maintain audio and video on connections as low as 50 kbps



Scalability.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of rapid scalability in telehealth. Even without a sudden catastrophic event, healthcare organizations tend to grow and evolve over time. A strong platform can easily scale to meet the facility's growing needs.



Frictionless connections.

App downloads or patient portal logins can add friction to the connection process, resulting in missed visits, frustration, or negative reviews. Mend sends a secure link via email or text, and patients enter their date of birth for authentication. Patients then connect effortlessly and securely to their visit from their browser on any device, reducing no-show rates. Tech support is available instantly if there is trouble with the connection on either side, with an average response time of 23 seconds.



Compliance.

Telehealth software should be 100% secure, confidential, and HIPAA compliant to ensure patient data is protected. In addition to HIPAA, Mend is SOC 2 Type 2 based on HITRUST, NIST CSF, HITECH Act, E-Sign Act, COPPA, ADA WCAG 2.0, PCI, CAN-SPAM, TCPA, & 42 CFR Part 2 compliant.

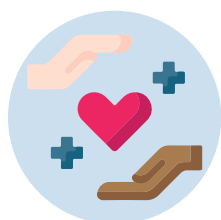
Digital Intake Forms

Digital intake forms are an incredibly important part of any telehealth platform. [KPIs for digital intake forms](#) include:



Reducing No-Shows

While appointment reminders are important, digital forms can also help lower missed appointment rates. Once a patient has completed the forms, they are more likely to show up for the visit. Mend's no-show rate was just 7.4% in 2022, compared to the national average of 23%.



Renewed Focus on Care

Digital forms reduce staff workloads. This allows the entire team to focus more on patient care and less on filling out paperwork. One report found that physicians spend 15.5 hours per week on paperwork and administrative tasks. Nine hours are spent on EHR documentation. With Mend, forms are moved to the EHR automatically after the patient completes them.

Faster and Easier Intake

When they complete their intake forms in advance, patients no longer need to arrive well ahead of their appointment. And they can pass the time relaxing or watching educational videos, rather than filling out forms. It's simpler and easier for everyone. However, not all platforms are using digital forms to their best advantage. Things to consider when looking at a platform's digital intake forms include:



Completion rates. A strong telehealth platform with easy-to-use digital forms can achieve completion rates as high as 86%. And once the forms are completed, patients are more likely to keep their appointments.



Partial completion rates. Do patients tend to stop partway through the digital forms? If so, it's worth looking into why. Perhaps the form is confusing or too long, or maybe there is a technical issue such as the inability to submit it.



Speed to completion. How long does it take for patients to return their forms? The best platforms have one-hour completion rates upwards of 65%, with about three-quarters of all forms coming back within a day.



Automation. Does the platform use AI, machine learning, or other tools to automate the processes surrounding digital intake forms? Can the system automatically send out the required forms when the patient self-schedules an appointment? What happens to the data once it's collected? Does the system automatically update the patient's EHR, check insurance eligibility, and input everything into the organization's PMS?

Putting It All Together

Patient engagement plays a key role in boosting patient satisfaction and retention, receiving top quality control scores from accreditation boards, and driving better health outcomes. Every step of the patient journey, from the moment of first contact through follow-up, is filled with opportunities to drive stronger patient engagement.

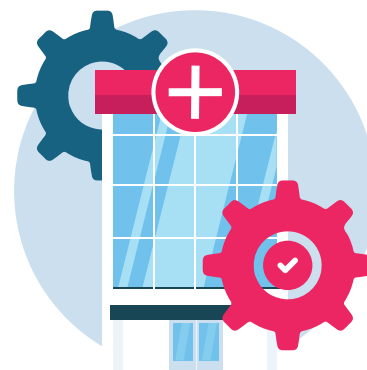
In today's world, patients expect healthcare to be as simple and easy as ordering dinner or buying groceries online. A strong telehealth platform with a focus on boosting patient engagement can help make this a reality. Simultaneously, it allows healthcare organizations to redirect staff focus away from repetitive and time-consuming tasks such as appointment reminders and taking routine vitals. It's a win-win-win:



Patients become more involved in their own healthcare journey and experience better health outcomes.



Providers and staff have more time and energy to devote to patient care.



Healthcare organizations experience stronger metrics in everything from patient retention to quality control.

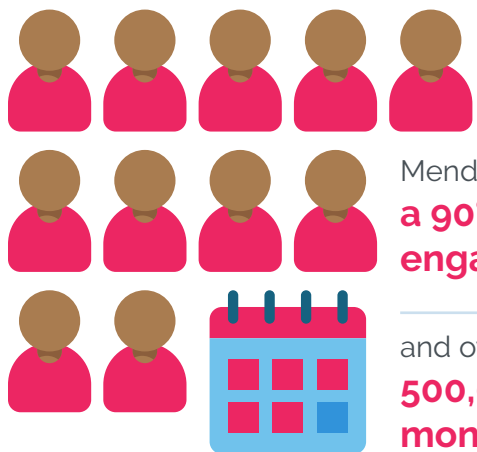
Be mindful though that not all telehealth platforms are the same. Stakeholders must use KPIs to make data-driven decisions that ensure that whatever platform they choose is truly right for their organization. In these rapidly changing times, it's important to select a platform with proven scalability, a forward-looking vision, and support for the rapidly changing policies and regulations surrounding telehealth.

How Mend Can Help

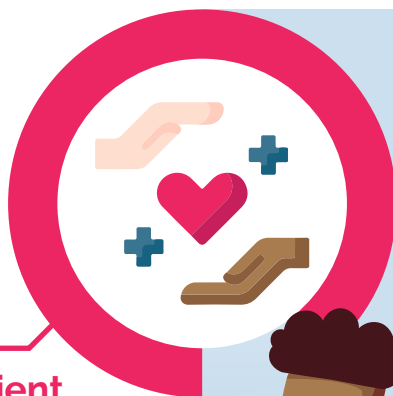
From its 2014 beginnings as a mobile app for rapid appointment scheduling through its launch as a full-service telehealth platform in 2016, Mend has always been ahead of the curve in providing easier access to healthcare. In 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mend scaled quickly to meet the healthcare industry's need for fast and convenient remote care. The number of average video visits grew from 1 million per month to 1 million per day by May.

In 2023,

Mend completed its
10 millionth successful visit.



Mend has
**a 90% patient
engagement rate**
and over
**500,000
monthly visits.**



Healthcare organizations in all 50 states partner with Mend to improve patient communication and care delivery. The result? Single-digit no-show rates that deliver improved clinical outcomes and increased revenues for partner healthcare organizations.

Want to learn more about becoming a partner to Mend? **[Schedule a call here.](#)**

1. <https://www.talkdesk.com/news-and-press/press-releases/chime-research-2022/>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6996004/>
3. <https://www.beckersasc.com/asc-news/the-150b-repercussions-of-patient-no-shows-5-statistics.html>
4. <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/press-release/1-in-10-adults-owe-medical-debt-with-millions-owing-more-than-10000/>
5. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-130/Accenture-2020-Digital-Health-Consumer-Survey-US.pdf
6. [https://www.npjjournal.org/article/S1555-4155\(20\)30515-8/fulltext](https://www.npjjournal.org/article/S1555-4155(20)30515-8/fulltext)
7. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-physician-relationships/the-hours-23-physician-specialties-spend-on-paperwork-administration.html#25>