

White Paper

# AI at the Front Door: Transforming Behavioral Health Admissions



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In health care, data tells the tale. And in behavioral health, one number stands above the rest: nine of 10 people who need behavioral health care never receive it<sup>1</sup>.

That's a staggering figure that certainly pains all care providers. That's because even when patients seek help, the intake process can fail them:

- Approximately 20% of inbound phone calls are missed or go to a messaging service
- Nearly 80% of web inquiries are not successfully contacted
- Admissions and intake staff can vary widely in training, availability and consistency

Those entry points are the “front door” of behavioral health: the places where new patients enter an organization. And for far too many potential patients, the front door is closed.

Leading behavioral health organizations are now bolstering their patients' care journey with AI-enabled intake solutions — from real-time coaching during live calls to AI-driven phone and web chat systems that engage clients when staff are unavailable. These tools are trained and customized for behavioral health scenarios and possess a range of evidence-based practices, including motivational interviewing, trauma-informed language and active listening.

## KEY TERM: **Front Door**

The **‘front door’** is the first touchpoint for prospective patients! Examples include calls, web forms and text messages. This is where patient care begins.

**In this white paper, you will discover:**



How to use AI to bridge access and care gaps



How Anonymous Health users have boosted admissions by 20%



Answers from leading organizations that are driving the transformation

<sup>1</sup>AMA 2019



## How AI is Transforming Behavioral Health Admissions

Bob Poznanovich will never forget the day that a behavioral health intake specialist saved his life.

Today, Poznanovich is Senior Fellow at Rosecrance Health and former Chief Growth Officer of Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, the nation's largest non-profit addiction treatment provider, annually serving approximately 23,000 patients across 15 locations and online platforms.

He made that life-or-death phone call to get treatment. What he found was “the right person.”

“She wasn't just there to complete the intake — what she did actually changed the trajectory of my entire life,” Poznanovich says. The woman told him, “I'm going to be stronger than your disease and I'm not going to let you fail.”

“I often think of what would have happened if a different person would have answered that call,” he says. “That call was such a fragile moment in my recovery.”

“She wasn't just there to complete the intake — what she did actually changed the trajectory of my entire life,”

**Bob Poznanovich**

Senior Fellow at Rosecrance Health  
Former Chief Growth Officer of Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation

For a person struggling with behavioral health challenges, simply making that phone call is an act of strength and bravery. The idea that 90% of those people won't find the help they need is devastating. Too many people in need fall through the cracks before beginning treatment. Whether by phone or online, potential patients often encounter delays, voicemail or missed connections at the very moment they are most ready to engage.

This is “the front door” — the place where a person in need takes the first step toward help.

# The Importance of Understanding Your “Front Door”

An AI-powered front door helps organizations close those gaps by supplementing, not replacing, the human touch. What would have happened to Poznanovich if the intake specialist who answered his call was a new employee still learning the job?

Or worse yet, what if the provider he called was short-staffed and no one answered the phone?

These and others are the challenges that an AI intake system, such as Heads Up from Anonymous Health, helps resolve. Founded in 2022 by Dr. Angie Chen of Stanford University, Anonymous Health was built by clinicians and has been shaped by real care. Today, the solution helps staff members stay focused on behavioral health care delivery in the midst of two moving targets: the patient’s rapidly varying readiness, and the simultaneous use of multiple technology platforms.

“These calls are really complicated,” Poznanovich says. “I think Heads Up helps remove some of the barriers that get in the way of the skills they already have because it provides these prompts that are gentle validating cues. These are real-time suggestions based on where their caller is within those stages of change of their psychological decision-making process.”

## The Four Capabilities That Heads Up Delivers:

- **24/7 intake coverage:** When staff members are not available, AI-enabled phone and web chat systems capture client information, triage needs, send paperwork for signature, and schedule the intake assessment.
- **Real-time coaching for live calls:** When admissions staff members are speaking with clients, conversation AI tools provide on-screen prompts, evidence-based motivational interviewing and other suggestions to optimize empathy and outcomes in the moment.
- **Personalized engagement:** AI uses insights from prior interactions to tailor messaging, helping patients feel understood and supported before they ever step into treatment.
- **Data-driven decision support:** Every interaction captured by AI contributes to a richer understanding of patient demand, referral patterns, and capacity trends, informing operational improvements across the organization.

*“AI doesn’t replace compassionate engagement — it scales it,” says Anonymous Health CEO Geoff Nudd. “These tools allow every inquiry to be met with immediacy, accuracy and warmth, ensuring that the desire for help is never met with silence.”*

# The 3 Pitfalls of AI Front Door Deployment — And How to Avoid Them

As behavioral health providers race to modernize operations, many organizations discover that adopting AI is not as simple as adding a chatbot or a call assistant. The promise of AI-driven access often stalls when the technology fragments rather than unifies the patient experience.

Here is a look at how providers are avoiding three common pitfalls of AI front-door deployment.

## The three common pitfalls of AI front-door deployment

- ① Fragmented point solutions
- ② Lack of shared patient context
- ③ Prioritizing paperwork ahead of conversion

### 1. Fragmented point solutions

The market is flooded with single-purpose AI tools designed for narrow functions: call routing, web chat, scheduling, documentation. While these tools may provide short-term relief in isolated workflows, they rarely communicate with one another.



The result is a fragmented patient journey where each interaction feels disconnected, forcing staff to re-enter data, repeat assessments and manage multiple dashboards. This disjointed approach erodes efficiency and undermines patient trust.

### 2. Lack of shared patient context

When AI tools operate in silos, patient context is lost. A patient who begins a conversation through a website chatbot shouldn't have to start over when they call the admissions line — or when they begin treatment or are an alumnus of your organization. Without unified data and AI models that share context across channels, each new interaction resets the narrative.



Providers lose valuable behavioral insights and patients feel unseen, a serious barrier in a field where personalized connection drives engagement and outcomes.

### 3. Prioritizing paperwork ahead of conversion



The highest impact use of AI in admissions is in supporting access and conversions, specifically leveraging AI to facilitate 24/7 access, commitment to treatment and scheduling. This involves segmenting the patient according to readiness for change and leveraging motivational interviewing and other approaches to secure commitment.

Only once the patient is committed does it make sense to shift the AI-driven dialogue and focus on the completion of pre-admissions paperwork. When organizations prioritize the big questionnaires first, conversion suffers.

# The Solution: A Unified, Intelligent Front Door

The solution lies in a comprehensive AI suite purpose-built for behavioral health — a single connected platform that unifies intake, triage, and engagement across every access point. Instead of managing disconnected tools, providers can rely on one ecosystem where:

- **All interactions share a consistent patient context**, creating a seamless experience across phone, web chat and patient app
- **AI models are continuously refined** with behavioral health-specific data and evidence-based frameworks
- **Compliance, safety and ethical governance are built into the architecture** — not bolted on after deployment
- **Real-time analytics inform both care quality and business performance**, turning access interactions into actionable insights.
- **Context flows through the entire patient journey**, with AI patient interactions from “first touch” carrying through all the way to long-term alumni applications

This approach transforms AI from a patchwork of digital tools into a cohesive front door—one that preserves human empathy, streamlines operations and ensures every patient is met with clarity, consistency and care.



## OUTCOMES:

# How the AI-Enabled Front Door Boosted Admissions by 20%

Health care is mission-driven — and numbers help define that mission. The metrics that users are seeing with Heads Up from Anonymous Health are staggering. Here they are in three buckets: outcomes for patients, staff and the business.

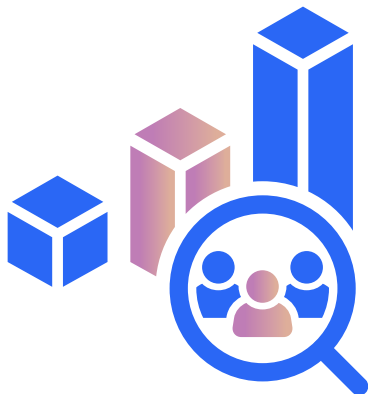
The big number:

**20% increase**  
in admissions among  
Anonymous Health users



### How AI builds wins for patients:

- **No more overflow / overnight misses:** AI systems ensure every call and chat can be engaged through full intake.
- **Immediately engaging web inquiries:** Converting from a one-way form completion to a two-way supportive and interactive dialogue to provide immediate support, intake and scheduling
- **Reduced wait times:** Instant triage and scheduling enable earlier intervention, often preventing crises before they escalate.
- **Improved satisfaction:** Patients report feeling more supported when engagement is consistent, responsive, and personalized.



### The Secret:

Anonymous Health's AI converts almost **one in three patient inquiries** to a completed admission. Its partners are achieving these results in as little as 30 days.

# FAQs: Answers To Real Questions About AI Admissions From Real Care Providers

In a Behavioral Health Business webinar, Geoff Nudd of Anonymous Health and Bob Poznanovich of Rosecrance Health answered a number of AI health care questions from real BH providers. Here's what they had to say.

## **Q: What guardrails have you put in place with your patient-facing AI tool to ensure safety?**

**A:** Anonymous Health's infrastructure ensures safety and performance, and is customizable to meet the needs of each given provider. For instance, some of their partners have their own crisis management capabilities. As such, Anonymous Health has an architecture that not only allows them to identify when somebody's in crisis, but when to do warm transfers.

"To my knowledge, we're the only organization in the industry that's been able to do these warm transfers from AI to another third party, whether that's on the web chat or via the phone," Nudd says.

Anonymous also runs large-scale simulations on each AI implementation so that they can manage to the specific needs and preferences of their partners.

## **Q: Can you share any data on the rates of engagement?**

**A:** For patients identifying themselves as ready for care immediately, more than 90% convert to a scheduled intake. It's important for the provider to have appointments available that the intake can schedule into.

Additionally, Anonymous Health's AI-assisted calls or chats convert 14.9% of all inbound calls to admissions. While the figure is highly dependent on a provider's call mix, it is still 50% higher than the company projected when they launched.



## **Q: If only 10% of the population that needs care is accessing treatment, and most of them are doing so following a crisis, in the near future will AI become that first entry point of actual care, hopefully before a crisis?**

**A:** The predictive power of AI is an exciting frontier. A recent study showed that AI was more successful than a panel of clinicians at predicting relapse among alcohol use disorder (AUD) patients, with AI 76% successful vs. the clinicians at 58%. If providers can identify risk factors upfront, and then on an ongoing basis, that creates the potential to intervene.



## Unlock Your Front Door With AI!

When prospective patients reach out for behavioral health care, that step alone is a massive achievement. So many people don't find a way to make that call. They must see the kind of life-changing action that Poznanovich found 30 years ago.

"Looking at Hazelden in the past, we had people call up to 20 times to get care," Poznanovich says. "Now, we've shortened that process and we can more frequently get them care in that first interaction. Through the use of AI, we can reach people much earlier in their disease."

To learn more, contact Anonymous Health at:

[sales@anonymoushealth.com](mailto:sales@anonymoushealth.com)

