

# Behavioral Health Clinical Navigator Promotes Equitable Access to Pediatric Care

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## Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the elements of the behavioral health system that often drive inequitable access to care.
- Recognize how the role of a behavioral health clinical navigator can drive effective behavioral health services for youth.
- Describe the role of the consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist in an integrated behavioral health model for youth.

## Background:

Pediatricians experienced significant barriers connecting patients and families to behavioral health services:

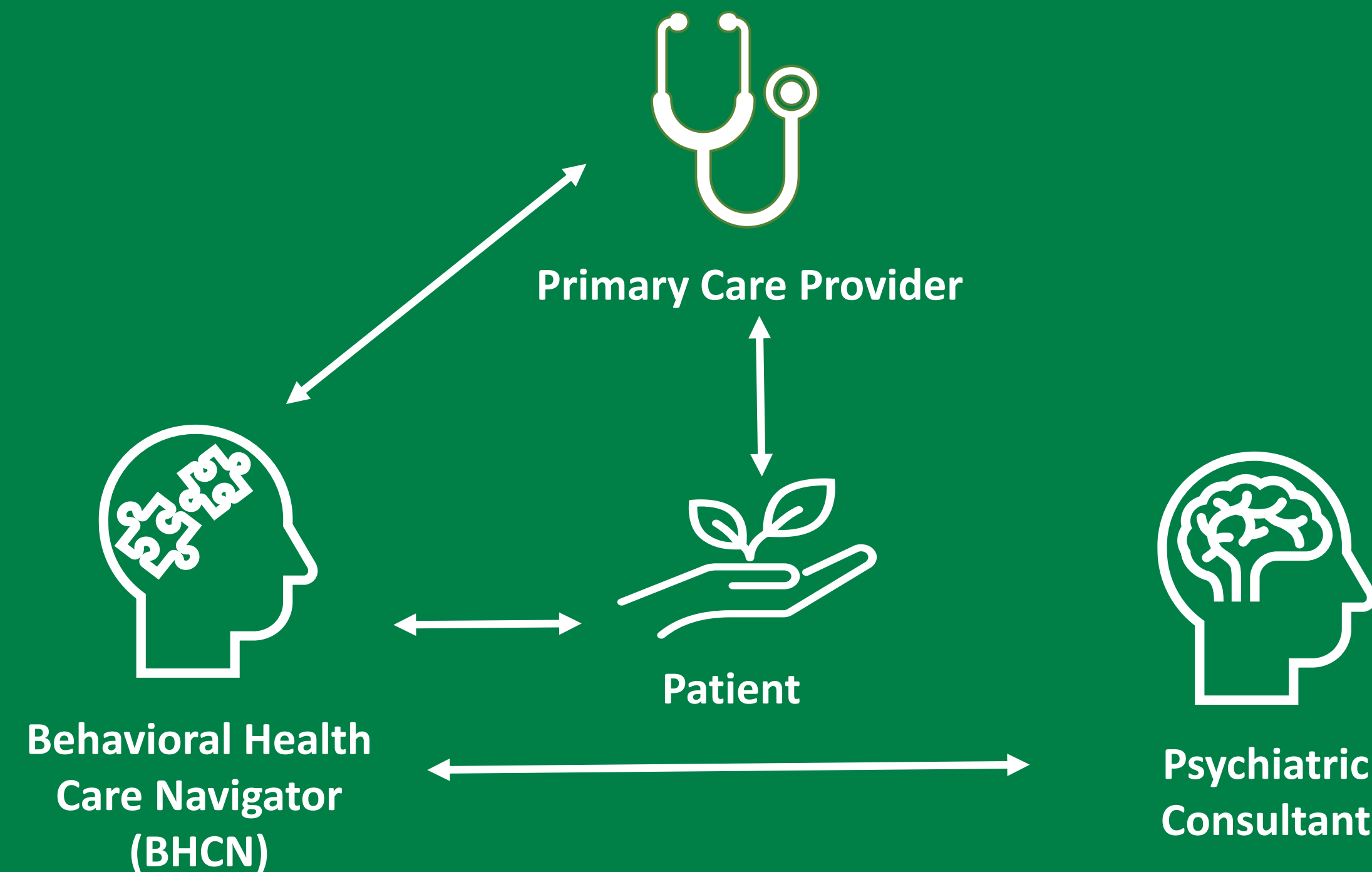
- Lengthy wait lists
- Lack of clarity for available resources
- Duplicative referral access points
- Ineffective triage and referral follow-up

As a result, patients and families lacked timely access to behavioral health care.

## Aims:

- Improve referral processes for pediatricians
- Increase pediatric patient and family access to behavioral health care

# Parenting is hard enough. We make finding behavioral health for your child easy.



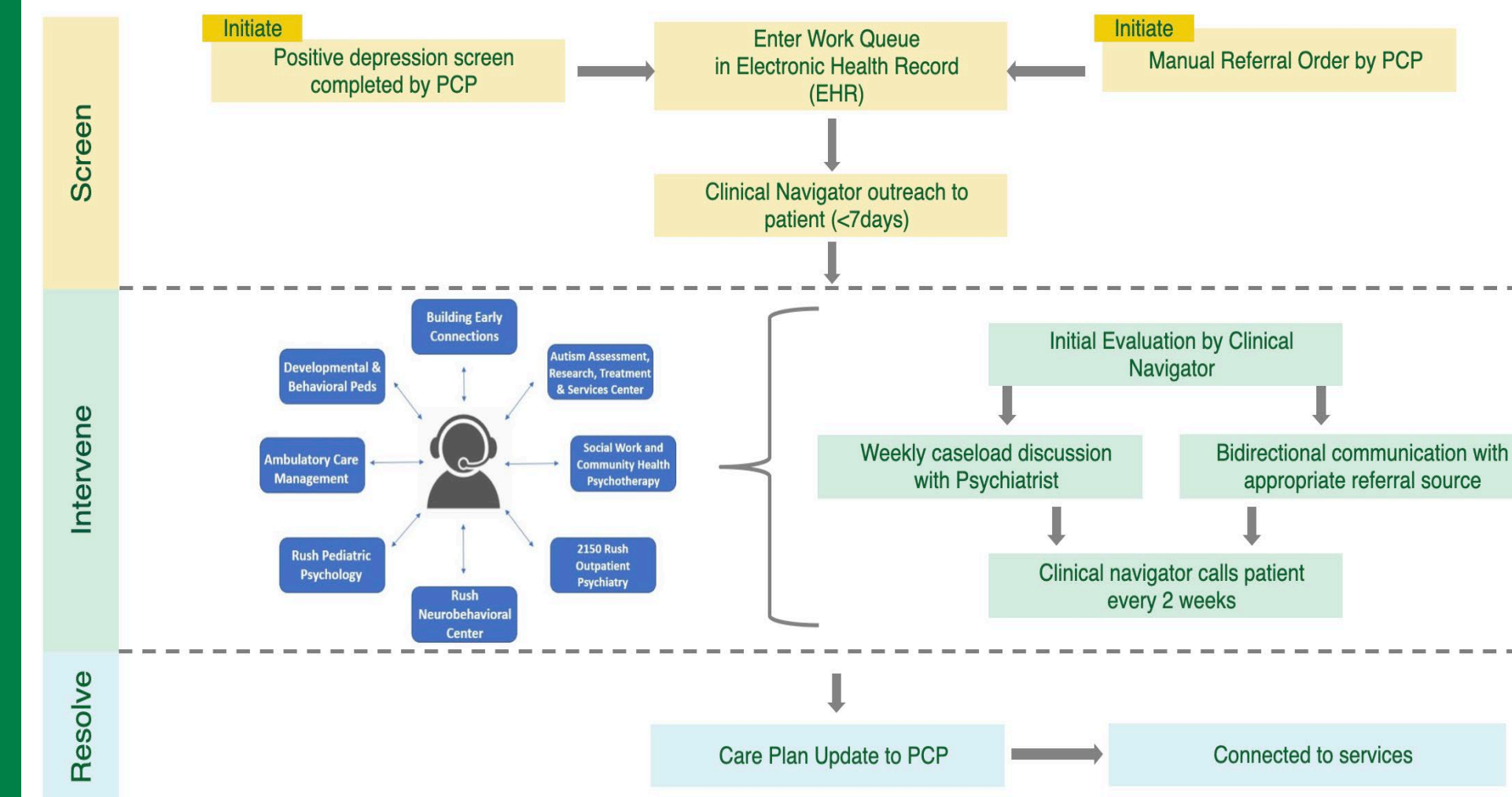
## Interventions:

- A central access point for behavioral health referrals
- A Behavioral Health Clinical Navigator (BHCN) role to manage referrals and connect patients and families to resources:
  - Schedules patients directly into Rush psychotherapy and psychiatry appointments; collaborates with external clinical sites.
  - Contacts patients to provide therapeutic support and ensure connection to services.
  - Consults with a psychiatric provider for patient risk stratification, medication initiation or management recommendations.
  - Communicates medication recommendations to the PCP to facilitate prescribing and primary management.

## Results:

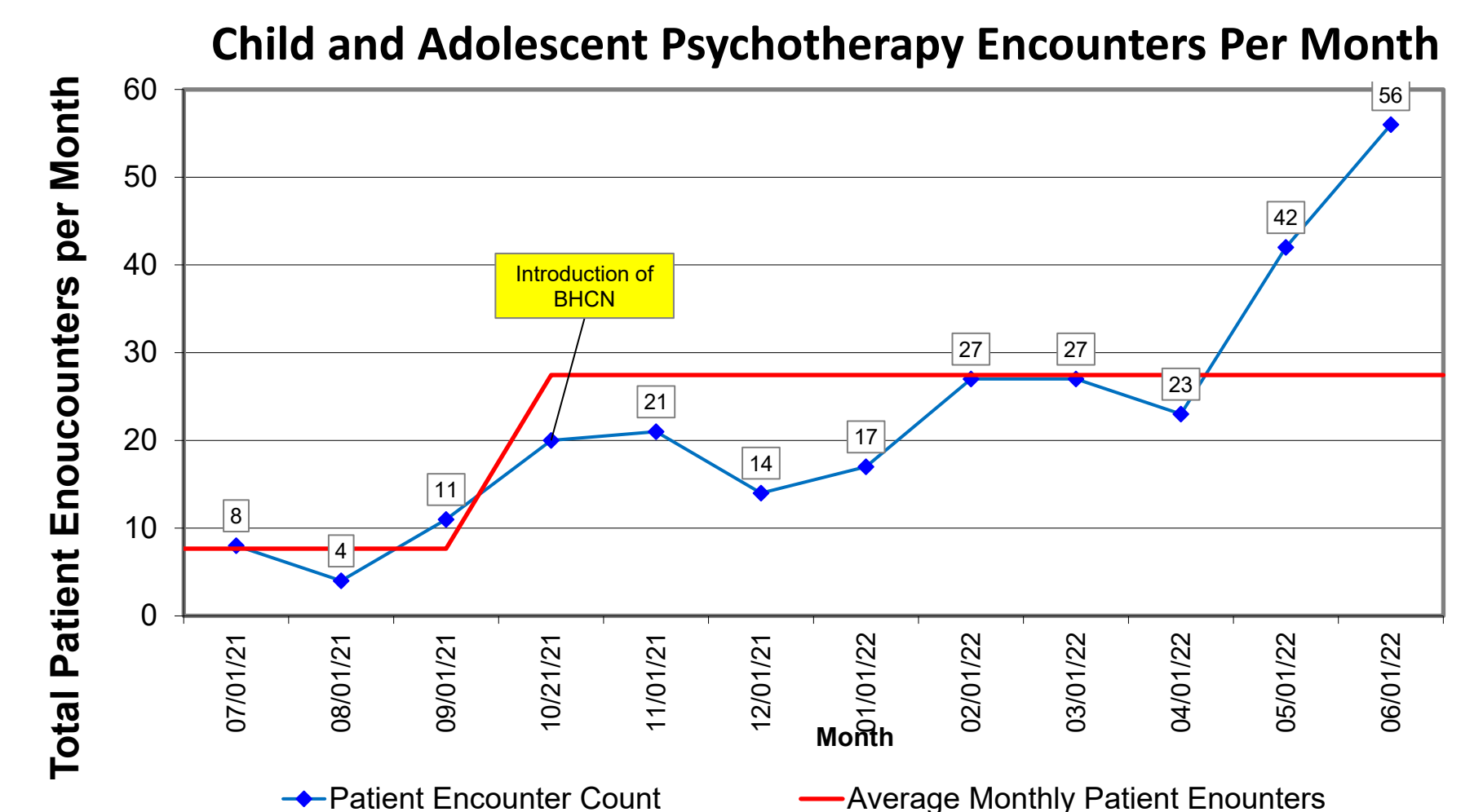
### Pediatrician Referrals:

- From January of 2021 to January 2022, referrals for pediatric patients to the BHCN **effectively doubled**.
- Peak in referrals within 4 weeks of the BH Clinical Navigator's launch.

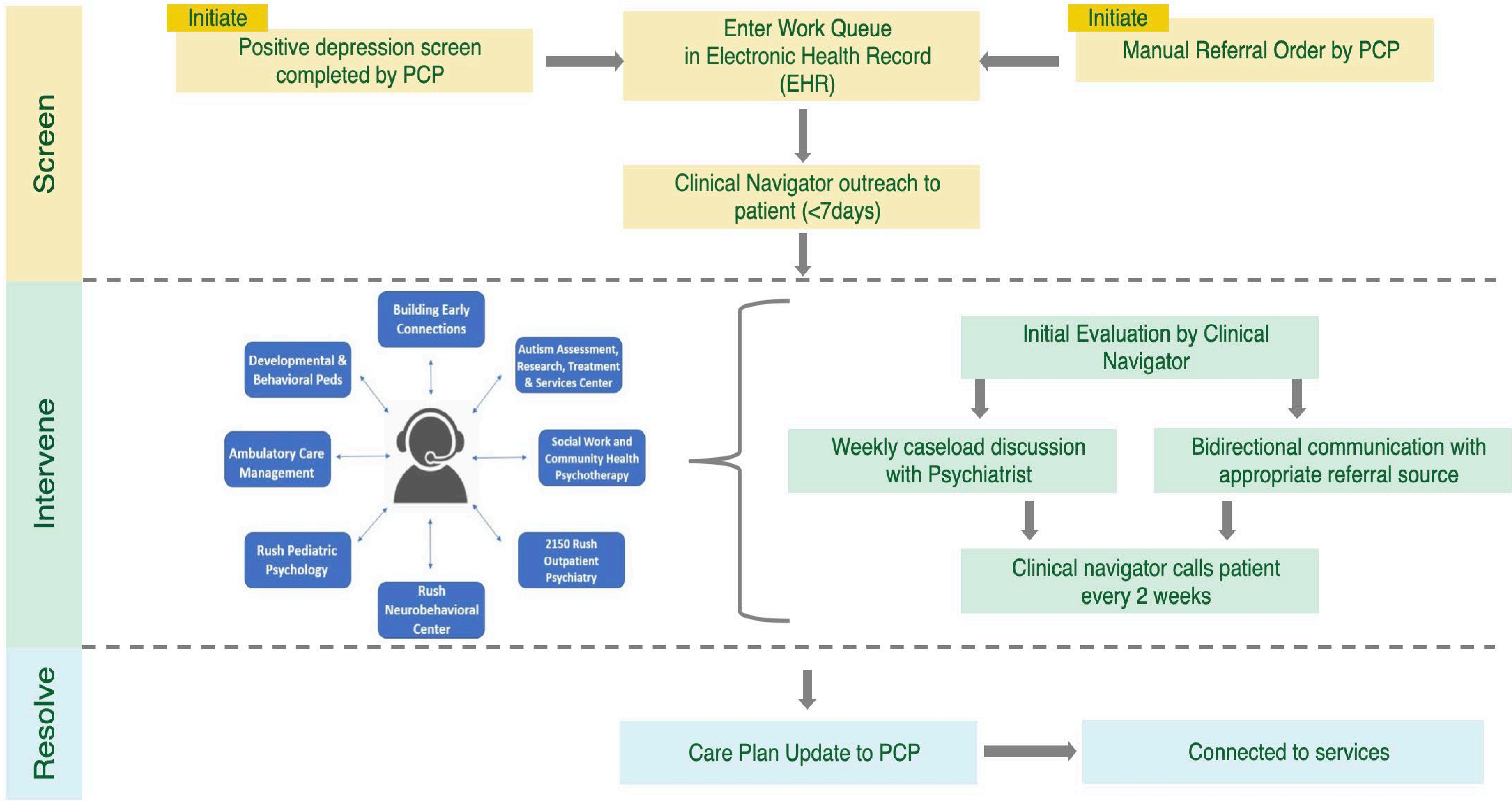


### Patient Access to Care:

- Patients referred and connected regardless of demographics, insurance status, or presenting behavioral health problem.
- Therapy encounters in outpatient clinic **increased by 73%**.



The authors have no relevant financial relationships to disclose.

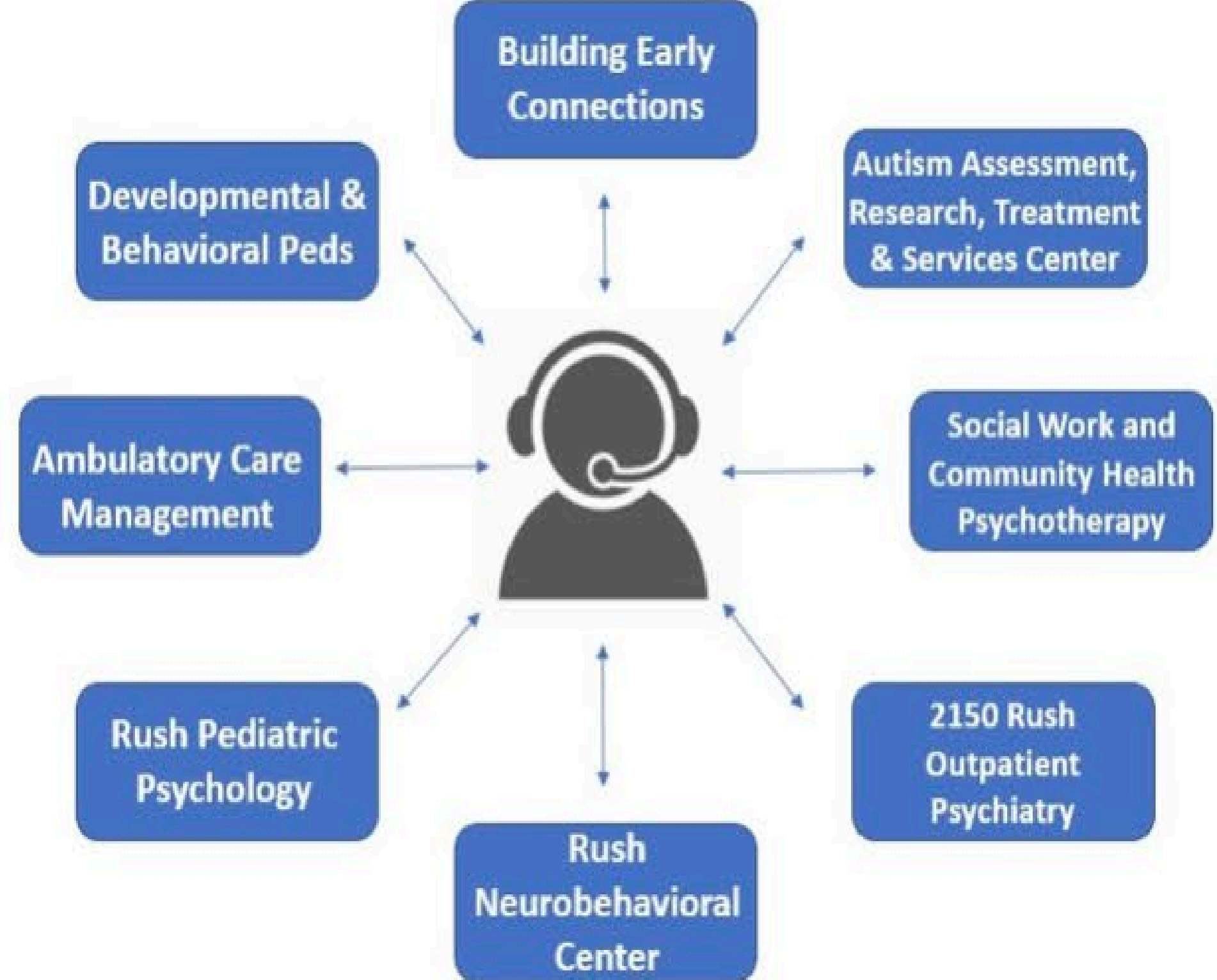


**Initiate**  
Positive depression screen completed by PCP

Enter Work Queue in Electronic Health Record (EHR)

**Initiate**  
Manual Referral Order by PCP

Clinical Navigator outreach to patient (<7days)



Initial Evaluation by Clinical Navigator

Weekly caseload discussion with Psychiatrist

Bidirectional communication with appropriate referral source

Clinical navigator calls patient every 2 weeks

Care Plan Update to PCP

Connected to services

# Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Encounters Per Month

