Mental health centers at USU see an increase in student participation amid pandemic

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Since moving to telehealth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Utah State University's physical and mental wellness employees have noticed an increase of students utilizing their resources.

Employees at the Student Health and Wellness Center and Counseling and Psychological Services, or CAPS, have both seen increased overall student engagement which officials say is attributable to the flexibility of online service models.

“Some of our workshops have had a 200 percent increase in the number of students who have attended,” when comparing this year to previous years, said psychologist and CAPS outreach coordinator Stacy Gerberich. “I think that being able to log onto a Zoom webinar from wherever you are makes it a lot easier for students to access what we have to offer, because it’s easier to fit into a busy schedule.”

Utah State student Maddie Alder has taken advantage of the virtual workshops. “I was only aware of the personal therapy or counseling sessions, but I really liked this mindfulness group that I went to,” Alder said. “I’ve enjoyed letting it be on my own time from the comfort of my home.”

Some of the Student Health and Wellness services have also seen an increase in demand.

“Our psychiatrist is as busy as ever,” said Ryan Barfuss, the health center prevention specialist. “He’s booked up all day long, every day of the week.”