Board of Directors and Executive Leadership Team

Letter from the President & CEO

Sound Accelerated Telehealth Adoption to Service Clients

A Culture of Inclusion—DEJI Blazing a Path

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2020 Financials and Demographics

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A little over a year ago, no one outside of the international medical community likely knew what “Covid” was. Or what impact it would have on our nation, our states, cities or communities. But we do now. The pandemic’s influence on Sound, our clinical practices, our business and technology investments, and of course, our clients and team members, cannot be overstated. Nor can its lasting impact on our business.

Organizationally, Sound prevailed, thrived even, over the past year. The pandemic thrust us into “triage mode,” where we quickly responded to the challenges it presented. We did not hesitate to take care of our team members, by extending paid sick leave and administrative pay for team members who had to stay at home to care for loved ones while working, and provided premium pay levels to team members who, due to client need, worked onsite at our locations. We rapidly outfitted each team member, more than 500 professionals with laptops so that team members could work from home when we all went into lockdown.

We temporarily closed some of our locations and switched to the Sound Urgent Care model, which focused services when and where they were most needed, through socially distant and appropriately staffed care at key locations. We did this to slow the spread of Coronavirus. We held frequent department-wide Covid meetings to share information and strategize based on data shared.

Sound exponentially increased telehealth services to our clients so that they could continue receiving care – an achievement largely launched in March, the same time as the pandemic unfolded. We did this, and so much more, while navigating the uncertainties and ongoing changes that everyone faced. By doing so, we maintained continuity of care for our clients. We saved lives as a result.

Once we did begin a controlled re-opening of our sites, Sound implemented a comprehensive and evolving Covid protocol that included screening and temperature checks, required face coverings, installation of air filtration systems, continued social distancing and internal environment design, and preparation for onsite vaccinations for our team members in 2021.

We did this through challenging financial times. The pandemic limited onsite visits, which reduced our client census throughout the past year. This, along with the changes to the County funding model, required we make adjustments to remain stable and available for the people in our community who needed us most. We have had to operate more efficiently and always mindful that the pandemic is still around us.

Words do not adequately communicate just how proud I am of the hard work, adaptability and commitment our many teams displayed during the relentless change that transpired during the pandemic’s first year. Whether it was our facilities and janitorial crews adjusting our sanitation and maintenance practices to ensure our facilities and housing remained clean and sanitary, our clinical teams continuing to do their jobs despite wild adjustments to new technology and onsite working conditions, or our administrative teams continuing to keep the organization moving smoothly despite less-than-smooth times, I am pleased so say “we did it.”

But our work is not done. There are still more clients to reach out to and assure that we are open and able to serve them, whether through telehealth or onsite support. There are more clients we can serve through our primary care services, now through four locations. We’ve discovered that despite obstacles, and unprecedented changes, we can adapt, we can evolve and we can continue to find ways to serve our community mission. I look forward to what the next year brings, with new and exciting ways to serve our community.

Patrick C. Evans
President & CEO
For years, Sound had explored telehealth as an option to enhance services to clients. But a regulatory landscape and reimbursement restrictions proved to be significant barriers to pursue the virtual platform.

Then the pandemic happened. As Covid created immediate and unparalleled levels of social isolation, anxiety, depression and sheltering in place, preventing clients from accessing care, authorities were compelled to loosen those barriers, paving the way for rapid utilization of telehealth by community behavioral health care providers, like Sound.

“It was truly amazing how quickly we ramped up to serve our clients through telehealth,” states Katrina Egner, Sound’s Chief Programs Officer. “The investments in IT infrastructure and the way our team members quickly moved to the new model played a significant role in our ability to continue providing our life saving services to the community who needed us.”

As 2020 progressed, it became clear that telehealth would be the primary option to engage clients.

As a large provider to thousands, Sound still needed to continue providing onsite services for clients who did not have the resources, or devices, to participate in telehealth. Yet telehealth still allowed clients with the capability to receive the care they needed. Telehealth services have helped a wide range of clients, from those who need more intensive supportive services to its Sound Solutions clients, who typically require less intensive services. Telehealth had also been used to provide group services to clients, enabling them to maintain contact with providers and their community of peers.

At the beginning of 2020, prior to the pandemic, Sound’s total service hours for telehealth were at two hours. By the end of the year, there were more than 44,745 total telehealth service hours delivered, with thousands of client engagements.

Today, it remains unclear just how much telehealth will factor into a new “hybrid” delivery mix in 2021 and beyond. Sound’s leadership team, however, has strong reason to believe that due to the ongoing pandemic, coupled with very clear metrics indicating the that platform has been very effective in serving Sound’s clients, telehealth will have a place for years to come.

“Even though it is too soon to determine where things will go, we believe that telehealth is here to stay in some form,” says Sound’s President & CEO, Patrick Evans. “We have all come too far, and clients have truly benefited from telehealth, to completely go back to onsite care as an only option. We are excited to continue to offer it to the people we serve in the future.”
As our region endured lockdowns, isolation and heightened awareness of inequality in 2020, Sound’s commitment to Diversity, Equity, Justice & Inclusion (DEJI) seemed, overnight, to emerge into the spotlight. But it had been steadily growing since its inception in 2018—enabling a robust response to and mobilization during the surging racial unrest, turmoil and protests sweeping the country last year. With the appointment of Kevin Henry, a veteran diversity professional of more than 20 years, the creation of Sharing Circles, proactive engagement of team members, high profile executive communications denouncing police brutality, an increased use of social and digital media and many other programming, DEJI really made its mark last year.

But the focus is not just on racial issues. The commitment to DEJI is about equity: LGBTQI, women, gender and any other marginalized communities are the focus. But the heightened racial unrest of the past year shone a bright light on many different levels of hate throughout the community. The objective is to bring awareness to biases so that Sound could work through them to build a culture that is more inclusive, that allows individuals, regardless of color, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, to express themselves in a safe environment and to be heard.

“The things we’re doing actually allows people at work to process and be able to find strength at work because they have a way of talking through things without judgement,” says Charlotte Jones, Chief People Officer, Diversity|Inclusion. “I believe that gave meaning and hope to the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) population within Sound.”

Jones knew the DEJI actions were having an impact. “The fact that we’re listening to team members who are saying ‘I need training, I need education to help my clients, to help my team members,’ shows change is happening.”

Years ago, Sound recognized that it needed to focus more on the BIPOC community, given that was a considerable part of the people it served. Jones acknowledges that Sound did not have the clinician demographic to serve those numbers. While DEJI may have begun as a means to recruit more people of color, it quickly shifted focus to establishing a cultural foundation at Sound around diversity and inclusion. “This is Sound and this is what we believe in and what we advocate for,” she says.

According to Henry, tangible programming is essential to transform the organization’s culture. DEJI has been bringing in guest speakers who discuss topics such as racialized trauma, what it means to be an effective white ally, the essential need to use appropriate pronouns, and other topics. DEJI also has secured strategic partnerships with the NAACP Health Committee, the Office of Police Accountability, the Washington League of Minority Voters and the Health Industry Leadership Table (HILT) to name a few. Mentorship programs, Sharing Circles (where team members share insights with other team members), Learning Sessions (where executives enable team members to share their concerns), and a dedication to enabling team members the space to create their own opportunities enable openness, communication, learning and understanding.

Henry’s hope for DEJI is to “create an environment where people can experience personal and professional growth when it comes to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice issues. Part of the activities we have are to get people to understand our communities better, be better clinicians (and professionals), through being able to better understand racialized trauma.”

The one thing that both Jones and Henry emphasize is that DEJI is a long term work in progress.

“It’s a living culture of things that we apply to our everyday working life,” Jones says, noting that that DEJI is a framework for Sound to exist in the world around it, and among the people it employs and serves.

“We are completely 100% committed to it,” Henry explains, “it is an ongoing commitment for us and it is a priority.”
For more than 50 years, Sound has been unwavering in supporting its clients. The organization has experienced a lot of challenges during its five decades, but nothing quite like the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis both created new traumas for our clients, and isolated them from the in-person care critical to their recovery. Below are three client stories that represent our clients’ collective strength:

**Paul:** A Sound client since 2009, Paul* has seen his share of challenges. Living with depression and having overcome substance use and homelessness, Paul came to appreciate the support he was receiving from clinician, Jim Nielson. Though Paul continued to visit Sound’s Capitol Hill campus for socially-distanced, in-person care, he still had to isolate during the pandemic. Sound not only continued to provide care and support, but when he needed kitchen equipment to help him prepare meals in the home, and stay nourished, Sound stepped up and purchased him a new microwave. Nielson’s attentive care made the difference.

“Without Jim, a lot of times (during the pandemic), I don’t know which way I would have gone,” he says. “I appreciate him; I appreciate him a lot.”

Today, Paul remains safe, stable and in good spirits, and is looking forward to a time when the pandemic is no longer an ever-present threat and life can return to some level of normalcy.

**Ken:** A client with Sound since 2018, Ken’s* progress might have been threatened by the pandemic, if not for telehealth services and the effective care provided by TomAaron Batterson, his therapist.

Living with generalized anxiety disorder and a survivor of suicide attempts, Ken managed to remain stable and engaged in recovery—despite the increased isolation, disconnectedness and continual worry about personal safety he experienced last year. But his bond with Batterson sustained him, and the relationship grew through the more consistent and frequent engagement telehealth services made possible. Telehealth delivered four meetings a month, as compared to twice a month, pre-pandemic.

“Staying in touch with Strollo helped Shay navigate the difficulty of leaving her group home. “Janet has been very helpful to me because she could talk to me like ‘Shay this is not the worst thing to lose this place.”

**Shay:** The pandemic made life challenging for Shay*, as it would anyone. The comfort of her routines disrupted, her friends distanced themselves and visiting her clinician, Janet Strolle, for in-person sessions was, early in the pandemic, postponed. As a client in Sound’s Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) program, her interactions with Strollo were life affirming, so the isolation—and the mental and emotional turmoil that jeopardized Shay’s progress—compelled Sound to provide Shay a cell phone. Though the phone was a lifeline, a gateway to stay in touch with clinical services and maintain vital contact with her friends, the pandemic still took its toll. It resulted in what Shay refers to as a rough period toward the end of the year, eventually causing her to leave the group home she was in and transitioning to another.

Staying in touch with Strollo helped Shay navigate the difficulty of leaving her group home. “Janet has been very helpful to me because she could talk to me like ‘Shay this is not the worst thing to lose this place.”

Strollo has been a guiding light to Shay, even during the toughest of times, tailoring care by talking everyday on the phone, visiting her at her home and also the Capitol Hill North facility.

“Shay and I have a very unique relationship. I always try to help her do a little better if she can do a little better and so for me it’s always about listening to where she’s at...and helping her take the next step.”

*Last names not used for confidentiality purposes
Ensuring the safety and health of Sound’s clients and team members during the pandemic was a key focus for Sound in 2020. When the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus outbreak a pandemic in March 2020, Sound quickly powered up its effort to minimize risk to our clients, their families and our team members. Below are key initiatives implemented last year to maintain the safety of our facilities and our people. We continue these into 2021, as well:

**Environmental Safety**
Immediately after the pandemic began, Sound implemented its “Sound Urgent Care Model,” essentially temporarily closing sites and reducing office hours, to ensure that care could still be delivered but minimizing exposure risk to clients. We also invested heavily in telehealth platforms, so we could continue to provide services to clients in a safe and effective manner. These changes ensured the safety of our team members and clients while delivering the services our clients needed.

Once sites were gradually reopened in the summer of 2020, several new protocols were developed and communicated to returning team members:

- Sound added additional environmental specialists to our team and invested in electro-static cleaning equipment and implemented a rotational sanitation schedule to ensure sites were cleaned.
- If cases of Covid were suspected, sites were quarantined and immediately cleaned.
- Additional hand sanitizer dispensers were installed at all locations.
- All sites received regular shipments of hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, wipes and Personal Protective Equipment gear as required.
- Where applicable, all HVAC system filters were upgraded to MERV-13 filters and filter replacement frequency increased.

**Team Member Safety**
- Sound implemented protocols for frequent hand washing, face coverings and social distancing for team members.
- Team members and clients arriving onsite were required to answer standard questionnaires, receive temperature checks and wear a surgical masks.
- Only essential team members—those supporting clients, or serving functions that could not be completed at home—were allowed onsite

**Communications**
- Sound formed a multi-site, multi-disciplinary Covid response team. Initially this team met daily, enabling team members to share vital information, discuss and strategize around emerging issues, and adjust protocols as required.

**Vaccinations**
- Once vaccines became available, Sound began providing information to team members about where they (as essential workers) could get vaccinated. Once our partner pharmacy began to receive the vaccine, we held an on-site vaccination clinic for team members and clients. Though the first vaccinations occurred in 2021, the preparation process began in late 2020.
Healthcare crises often create an accelerated need in the community—a mission Sound’s Development Team took strides to immediately address this past year. Whether soliciting funding for new telehealth programs, earmarking funds to assist during the crisis or partnering with foundations throughout the pandemic, the Development Team quickly spun into action:

**Sound Safety Net Fund:** The pandemic’s effect on many Sound clients was immediate and abrupt isolation, from people, from clinical care and from the outside world. Many of our clients told their therapist that we were their only link to the outside world. The Sound Safety Net fund, a resource created by the Development Team two years ago specifically to help clients in duress, distributed its funds in reserve during the crisis, providing phones, household appliances, toys, food and other essentials to ensure clients could remain stable, and know they were cared for, during the crisis.

**Virtual Fundraiser:** With social distancing mandates confounding plans to host Sound’s 2020 IMAGINE event in person, Sound’s Development Team, within six months, completely redesigned the fundraising luncheon, to an all virtual event with a silent auction. The theme even evolved to reflect the times, focusing on raising money to fund the Sound Safety Net Fund, with proceeds used to continue supporting and engaging clients during the pandemic. The event raised nearly $100,000.

**Covid-Inspired Giving:** Touching the lives of so many in the community, particularly due to the pandemic, Sound was a consequential partner to many foundations and individuals looking to make an immediate impact.

Recognizing the challenging and dauntless work of Sound clinicians engaging our clients, our donors helped us raise nearly $400,000 in support of our work during Covid. Thanks to Seattle Foundation, the Glaser Foundation, Puget Sound Energy Foundation, Norcliffe Foundation, First Financial NW Foundation, East Seattle Foundation, the Snoqualmie Tribe and, of course, our individual donors.

In addition, a $200,000 grant from the Premera’s Social Impact program supported essential repairs to Willows House, a residential complex in South Seattle, that houses women recovering from addiction and behavioral health issues, along with their children. The grant also helped to complete a long term sustainability plan and provide onsite counseling and substance use disorder treatment and vocational training to the residents. Finally, we recognize the ongoing funding provided to Sound from the Cambia Foundation, who supported our Children’s Domestic Violence Response Team.
Thank You 2020 Sound Donors

Sound appreciates contributions from individuals, companies, and foundations. Their support enabled us to improve the lives of more than 15,800 clients in 2020. Sound has made every effort to accurately acknowledge our donors.

To report corrections, please contact the Sound Development office at (206) 901-2060.
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