



Kipu's Innovators of the Year 2025:

Real Stories of Ingenuity,
Impact, and Inspiration



Kipu

Innovation with Purpose

Innovation in behavioral health is a matter of momentum. It's the difference between keeping pace with change and leading it, between burnout and breakthroughs. Every advancement that helps providers reclaim time, improve accuracy, or deepen human connection translates directly to better patient care.

The Kipu Innovator Awards were created to highlight behavioral health organizations and leaders who combine creativity, curiosity, and technology to solve real-world problems in care. This year's Kipu Innovator Awards celebrate organizations brought bold ideas to life, turning technology into transformation.

Across the country, these behavioral health leaders reimagined what's possible when vision meets capability. They found new ways to connect data to decisions, streamline intake into engagement, and use artificial intelligence not to replace clinicians, but to empower them.

**From large networks to community programs,
each winner reflects a shared principle:**

**innovation is not about adopting
new tools, it's about applying existing
ones with new imagination.**

**These are not just stories of success; they are blueprints for
what the next era of behavioral health can look like.**

Award Categories and Winners

Kipu's Innovator Awards recognize excellence across several categories designed to reflect the diverse ways organizations are transforming behavioral health through technology:



Innovator of the Year

Honors the organization that demonstrates extraordinary impact and creative use of Kipu solutions to improve care delivery and outcomes.

Winner:



AI Innovator

Recognizes forward-thinking use of artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency, compliance, or care quality.

Winner:

NF NEW FREEDOM



EMR Innovator

Celebrates advanced application of the Kipu EMR for improved clinical operations and data-driven decision-making.

Winner:



Patient Experience Innovator

Highlights exceptional improvements to client engagement, intake, and satisfaction.

Winner:



Enterprise Innovator

acknowledges scalable innovation and operational excellence across multiple locations.

Winner:



Mid-Market Innovator

Honors creative workflow solutions that improve efficiency and reduce administrative burden.

Winner:



Small Business Innovator

Recognizes smaller programs achieving outsized impact through customization and resourceful system use.

Winner:



1. Where Innovation Is Happening

Behavioral health organizations face a paradox: the demand for care continues to climb while resources like staff time, funding, and infrastructure remain limited. The most successful innovators are tackling that gap head-on, using technology to multiply the impact of their teams and the reach of their mission.

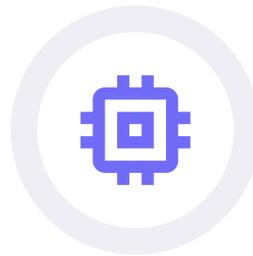
This year's winning projects cluster around four emerging frontiers:



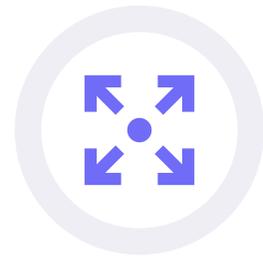
AI as a
Force Multiplier



Data as a
Clinical Compass



Digital Experience
as Care



EMR Workflows as
Efficiency Engines

Each theme offers lessons every provider can apply, regardless of size or specialization.

AI as a Force Multiplier: Augmenting Clinicians, Not Replacing Them



Featured Innovators:



NF NEW FREEDOM

Artificial intelligence is changing what's possible in behavioral health, but only when it's designed to strengthen—not overshadow—human care. This year's winners are using AI as a true force multiplier: freeing clinicians from administrative weight, improving compliance, and creating space for more meaningful interactions with patients. Banyan Treatment Centers and New Freedom show how automation can free clinicians from the drag of documentation while revealing new insights that shape care in real time.

At Banyan, embedding AI tools like Chart Snapshot and Note Assistant into existing workflows cut documentation time by more than **30%**, returning valuable hours to clinicians and improving compliance. At New Freedom, AI-driven reporting and creative use of EMR fields illuminated outcomes rarely tracked in behavioral health, from recidivism reduction to job placement success, helping the team demonstrate social impact as well as clinical results.

Together, these examples illustrate how AI acts as a force multiplier: accelerating what works, connecting information across silos, and returning attention to where it matters most—the patient. The real breakthrough isn't the technology itself but how it's implemented: integrated directly into care, informed by clinician feedback, and measured by human outcomes.

Key Takeaways for Every Provider

Start where it hurts most:

Target AI at administrative bottlenecks that drain clinician time.

Integrate, don't isolate:

Tools built into existing systems ensure adoption and sustainability.

Use data for purpose:

When AI reveals trends that inform care decisions, efficiency and empathy rise together.

Build a culture of learning:

Continuous feedback and iteration make AI smarter and teams stronger.

Data as a Clinical Compass: Measurement-Informed Care at Scale



Featured Innovator:



Measurement-informed care sharpens decision-making, improves outcomes, and gives leaders a clear view of what's working and where to adjust. For behavioral health executives, mastering data strategy isn't about dashboards, it's about unlocking the power to intervene earlier, guide teams better, and sustain long-term success.

Forge Health offers a model for data-forward transformation. By automating key assessments through Kipu's Outcomes Measurement tools and integrating results into BI dashboards, the organization turned thousands of data points into actionable insights. Clients automatically receive WHO-5 assessments at regular intervals, and clinicians use those updates to refine treatment and track progress in real time. System-wide dashboards reveal trends by clinic, provider, and population, helping leadership pinpoint where engagement and outcomes are strongest and where support is needed.

The impact is tangible: more than **4,900** clients enrolled in outcome tracking, attendance rates above **85%**, and stakeholders across the organization gained stronger visibility into population health trends. Forge's success underscores a broader truth: when behavioral health organizations connect data collection directly to clinical action, they gain the feedback loop every care model needs.

Key Takeaways for Every Provider

Automate to empower:

Streamlining assessment delivery ensures consistency and reduces manual workload.

Close the loop:

Turn outcomes data into clinical conversations that guide supervision and care planning.

See the story in the numbers:

Dashboards and BI tools should tell clinicians what to do next, not just what happened.

Measure what matters most:

Use data to illuminate client progress and system-level improvement, not just compliance metrics.

Digital Experience as Care: Streamlining Intake and Engagement



Featured Innovators:  **GUARDIAN RECOVERY**  **THE CENTER
A PLACE OF HOPE**

First impressions matter, and a client's first experience with a behavioral health program sets the tone for their entire recovery journey. When intake and onboarding are stressful, confusing, or overly administrative, clients disengage before treatment even begins. When done well those early moments communicate safety, professionalism, and care.

For providers, improving the digital experience means creating early interactions that build trust, reduce stress, and set the tone for care that feels both professional and personal.

Guardian Recovery and The Center – A Place of HOPE both demonstrate how digital experience can become part of the treatment journey itself. By rethinking intake and documentation through the Kipu Client Portal and Kipu BI, they turned cumbersome processes into seamless, reassuring experiences that reduce barriers for clients and staff alike. Guardian streamlined virtual intake and record management across multiple sites, while The Center transformed arrival day into a moment of welcome and focus.

Both organizations made measurable, practical changes that reshaped their intake and engagement processes. Guardian automated medical record requests and introduced virtual intake documentation through the Kipu Client Portal, cutting down time spent on-site while improving data security and family communication. The Center – A Place of HOPE redesigned its intake experience entirely, allowing clients to complete forms remotely with guided instructions and video walkthroughs. These steps reduced orientation time from hours to minutes and helped clients arrive calmer and more prepared for care.

Their shared lesson is simple: operational excellence and client experience are inseparable. When technology is intuitive and empathetic, it not only saves time but also deepens connection and trust.

Key Takeaways for Every Provider

Make technology part of care:

Every digital touchpoint should make clients feel guided, not burdened.

Simplify, then humanize:

Streamline processes first, then build in moments of personal connection.

Use insight to adapt:

Track client and staff feedback to continually refine the experience.

See efficiency as empathy:

The time saved through automation is time returned to care.

Reimagining Workflows Inside the EMR: Customization and Creativity in Action



Featured Innovators:



D.E.S.E.R.T
RECOVERY CENTERS



tykes&teens
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Innovation within the EMR isn't about adding more tools, it's about using the ones you already have in smarter, more connected ways. For behavioral health organizations, the EMR is both the engine and the map: it drives workflows, tracks outcomes, and captures the daily rhythm of care. Yet its full potential often goes untapped. When teams reimagine how to use what's already there, they can find new efficiencies, elevate quality, and free up time for staff to focus on people instead of processes.

Desert Recovery Centers and Tykes & Teens took core Kipu features—documentation workflows, form design, and reporting—and reengineered them to fit their unique challenges. Desert Recovery created a three-signer documentation process that built accountability into every step of care, improving accuracy and audit readiness while keeping quality consistent across teams. Tykes & Teens tackled the burden of FASAMS reporting by redesigning its forms to auto-populate data, cutting hours of administrative work each week and reducing errors.

Both organizations approached change with curiosity and pragmatism. They involved their teams early, identified bottlenecks, and focused on what would have the biggest impact for staff and clients. Desert Recovery's changes led to fewer documentation errors, faster care transitions, and 93%+ audit scores from payers. Tykes & Teens saw similar results—reducing administrative hours, increasing accuracy, and freeing providers to spend more time in direct service. These outcomes prove that operational creativity can yield measurable gains in compliance, efficiency, and quality.

Together, they show that meaningful innovation isn't about more technology, it's about sharper use of what's already in place. By aligning their systems with how their teams actually work, both organizations saved time, reduced frustration, and built stronger foundations for care. The benefits reached beyond efficiency. Teams reported lower stress, smoother collaboration, and a stronger sense of ownership in their work. By eliminating redundant steps and making the system work for them, staff experienced less burnout and more pride in the quality of care they delivered.

Key Takeaways for Every Provider

Rethink before you rebuild:

Look for new ways to use existing EMR features to solve recurring problems.

Build accountability into the workflow:

Quality checks and structured reviews prevent issues before they start.

Automate what you can, standardize what you can't:

Smart form design and prefilled data fields reduce errors and save hours.

Include the team:

Engage staff early in redesigning workflows to uncover hidden challenges and build shared ownership.

Redefine efficiency:

Every process that saves staff time gives patients more of it.

2. Spotlight Profiles

Winner	Category	Key Impact
	Innovator of the Year	30–42% reduction in documentation time, improved clinician retention
NF NEW FREEDOM	AI Innovator	AI-powered reporting reduced overtime and enhanced recidivism insights
	EMR Innovator	Automated WHO-5 assessments, 4,900+ clients enrolled, 85–90% attendance rates
	Patient Experience Innovator	Intake time reduced from 2 hours to 30 minutes ; improved client satisfaction
	Enterprise Innovator	Virtual intake, BI-driven quality audit, streamlined scheduling
	Mid-Market Innovator	Saved 120–160 staff hours/month through form automation
	Small Business Innovator	Three-signer documentation system, 93%+ audit scores, strong engagement outcomes

3.

Cross-Cutting Insights: What We Learned from This Year's Innovators

**Across every category, one insight shines through:
innovation thrives where curiosity meets commitment.**

These leaders didn't wait for new technology to arrive. They made the most of what they already had. They experimented, iterated, and shared their lessons across teams.

**Several trends
stand out:**



Integration is the new innovation.

The most effective solutions, like Banyan's AI documentation or Guardian's BI quality toolkit, worked because they lived inside the EMR, not alongside it.



Data is personal when it drives care.

Forge and Tykes & Teens showed that when data is accessible and automated, it stops being paperwork and starts being insight.



Digital experience is care.

The Center – A Place for HOPE and Guardian demonstrated that seamless onboarding and communication build trust before treatment begins.



Accountability is an innovation too.

Desert Recovery's three-signer system reminds us that quality assurance can be just as transformative as any new algorithm.



AI succeeds when it saves time.

Every AI success story this year started not with ambition, but with empathy for the clinician's day.

Collectively, these innovations point toward a future where behavioral health technology serves not as a gatekeeper, but as a guide, empowering providers to focus on what only humans working together can do.

4.

The Future of Innovation in Behavioral Health

We believe some of the most important factors driving innovation in behavioral healthcare today—creativity, connection, and courage—will continue to be the accelerators for future success. The tools powering this change, from Kipu EMR and Kipu Intelligence to Kipu BI, are helping providers do more than keep up; they're setting new standards for how care is delivered, measured, and experienced.

But technology alone doesn't drive progress; people do. The true innovators are the clinicians, administrators, and leaders who see beyond the screen and imagine better ways to work. They're the ones who ask, "what if we could spend less time managing data, or catching up on documentation, or fighting against our own software, and more time changing lives?"

Across this year's winners, every innovation started with a simple question about how to make care better for patients and easier for providers. Whether through smarter workflows, AI-assisted documentation, or seamless intake experiences, each organization proved that progress in behavioral health happens when human insight meets practical technology.

To every leader:

innovation is a mindset that drives continuous improvement and shared progress. It's built one improvement, one workflow, one inspired idea at a time. And when shared, these ideas ripple outward, raising the standard for an entire field.

To every reader:

your next innovation story could start today. The tools are already in your hands. The opportunity is how you use them.

Build your own innovation story with Kipu.

Learn how to bring your ideas to life at kipuhealth.com