



Digital tools help more employees access behavioral health



On-demand care and self-help apps help employers address gaps in behavioral health care as more employees seek support.

In 2023, more than 29M Americans were unable to seek treatment for mental illness. Their main reasons for not receiving care were lack of time, financial constraints and confusion.¹

Since poor mental health can affect motivation and productivity at work,² not to mention other aspects of one's overall health and well-being, it's critical that employers do all they can to ensure employees can access behavioral health care.

"It is essential that people have access to behavioral health care and support throughout their entire health journey and at all levels of need," says Dr. Yusra Benhalim, senior national medical director of Optum Behavioral Health. "With faster access to behavioral health care services and support tools, members can engage earlier, before a crisis, and experience better outcomes."

Employers aiming to enhance behavioral health care options for employees and their families should consider including on-demand care and digital tools in their health plans. These solutions may help overcome barriers by offering quick and convenient access to care, eliminating the need for employees to leave their home or workplace.

Leveraging behavioral health digital tools and apps for ongoing self-care

Approaching mental health as an ongoing goal may help prevent more serious issues or crises from developing. For instance, employees who prioritize behavioral self-care can better manage stress, lower their risk of illness and increase their energy levels.³

Behavioral health care should be intuitive, equitable and accessible for all, with personalized and integrated experiences that provide measurable value throughout the entire journey. By leveraging digital tools and platforms to remove barriers to care and foster rapport with employees, employers can potentially benefit from a healthier and more productive workforce.

Consider myuhc.com[®] and the [UnitedHealthcare](#)[®] app. The enhanced Find Care experience allows members to search for behavioral health providers by specialty, including stress and anxiety, marital and family issues or substance use support. Plus, if employees don't know where to start, there's an option to answer a few confidential questions that can help guide them to the right care.

Other complementary self-help apps include self-paced programs that use evidence-based support techniques and resources—such as educational content—to help individuals improve their mental health and build life skills.

As the number of digital tools for mental health support continues to grow, it is crucial for employers to carefully consider which solutions, apps and resources, or a combination thereof, can help to effectively meet the specific needs of their employees.

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On-demand support for faster and more convenient access to care

On-demand health solutions aim to streamline access to quality care for people in need, improve flexibility for members and providers and yield outcomes comparable to in-person visits. And with the growing demand for behavioral health providers, on-demand solutions, including virtual visits, may allow employees to get help more quickly.

To facilitate that, **network designs** with a mix of in-person and virtual providers give employers the advantage of making behavioral health care available to more employees. For instance, UnitedHealthcare members can access urgent appointments within 24 hours and non-urgent appointments within 5 days with the Behavioral Care Connect network solution.

“Adding virtual health options into our network designs ignited the demand for members to access care when and where they wanted, which prompted us to start on a path towards revolutionizing our entire digital ecosystem of offerings.”

Trevor Porath

Vice President, Behavioral Health Solutions
UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual

Improving access to behavioral health care may also be as simple as offering an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

For example, the **UnitedHealthcare EAP** allows members to call specialists 24/7, at no additional cost, for a confidential assessment of their situation and a referral to licensed professionals and services, if needed. This can be a good place for employees to start when they're not sure what support they may need.

When an employee calls an EAP specialist, the specialist can provide whole-person, proactive support across a broad number of health needs, including emotional health, clinical and complex care support, legal or financial support and benefits information.

For those looking for more ongoing support, behavioral health coaching may be the best path. Virtual Behavioral Coaching is a personalized program that offers 24/7 access and dedicated 1-on-1 weekly coaching sessions via phone or video chat. It also provides convenient online scheduling and incorporates Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), a form of therapy that a growing body of research is finding produces favorable outcomes in helping manage symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress.⁴

“The coaching program is built on CBT, which previously was only available via live therapy sessions with a therapist. It offers employees an option in between a self-care app and outpatient therapy,” says Stacie Grassmuck, director of behavioral health product and innovation for UnitedHealthcare.

To ensure employees have access to behavioral health care, it's important for employers to consider offering digital tools and on-demand support that may help prevent a low acuity mental health need from becoming a more serious crisis.

Learn more

Contact your broker, consultant or UnitedHealthcare representative or visit uhc.com/broker-consultant and uhc.com/employer

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¹ The State of Mental Health in America. Mental Health America (MHA), 2023. Available: <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2023-State-of-Mental-Health-in-America-Report.pdf>. Accessed: March 28, 2024.

² Mental Health and Productivity. Psychology Today. Available: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/productivity/mental-health-and-productivity>. Accessed: April 1, 2024.

³ Caring for Your Mental Health. National Institute of Mental Health. Available: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health>. Accessed: April 5, 2024.

⁴ Long-term Outcomes of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety-Related Disorders. JAMA Psychiatry, March 2020. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6902232/>. Accessed: April 25, 2024.

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Behavioral Care Connect program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 if you are in the United States or the local emergency services phone number if you are outside the United States, or go to the nearest accident and emergency department. This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against UnitedHealthcare or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and all its components, in particular services to family members below the age of 16, may not be available in all locations and are subject to change without prior notice. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

When you sign up for Virtual Behavioral Coaching, you will be asked a series of questions to ensure that this program is the right fit for you. You may be directed to another resource if your answers indicate that a different type of program may better suit your needs.

The material provided through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is for informational purposes only. EAP staff cannot diagnose problems or suggest treatment. EAP is not a substitute for your doctor's care. Employees are encouraged to discuss with their doctor how the information provided may be right for them. Your health information is kept confidential in accordance with the law. EAP is not an insurance program and may be discontinued at any time. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against UnitedHealthcare or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and its components may not be available in all states or for all group sizes and is subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

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