

COVID-19 AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INDICATORS FOR EMPLOYER SPONSORED HEALTH PLANS

UNTREATED DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY CAN INCREASE HEALTH CARE COSTS




As we enter the tenth month of the global pandemic, the socio-emotional impact of COVID-19 on businesses and families continues to take its toll. The human psyche struggles to simultaneously maintain resilience and retain hope amidst breaks in the supply chain for goods and services, business and school closures, loss of wages and homes for workers, and the daily reminder of lives lost due to this virus.

The pandemic has resulted in workers across the spectrum including C-suite executives, human resources, frontline healthcare professionals, educators, work-at-home and essential workers experiencing overwhelming emotional fatigue and social isolation. Emotional and/or pandemic fatigue is characterized by feelings of physical and mental exhaustion, stress, sadness, loss of sleep, loss of control, grief, feeling disconnected and decreased productivity. The holiday season further exacerbates these feelings.

Prolonged loneliness can amplify chronic conditions including depression, heart disease and diabetes. It is critical that employers increase their awareness of employee mental health and social connectedness. When left untreated, loneliness, depression, stress and anxiety can result in higher medical, pharmacy, disability and worker's compensation costs.

STEPS YOUR COMPANY CAN TAKE NOW

Ask your healthcare vendor if they have a COVID-19 report card that tracks the impact of COVID-19 and behavioral health cost and utilization. Tracking and managing costs related to behavioral health can mitigate plan costs and optimize the health and well-being of your workforce. Here are some helpful metrics to track and compare to pre-COVID-19 data:

PLACE OF SERVICE	DATA POINTS	INDICATIONS
Emergency Room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the ICD-10 variances in the data to tell you the story Do you see an increase in visits or repeated visits by children or spouse? Repeat visits may indicate safety issues in the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upticks in injuries, burns, substance use, or depression may indicate safety issues in the home and/or potential for worker's compensation or disability claims This can be an indicator of difficulty coping with stress in the home and leads to higher healthcare cost and utilization
Inpatient Admissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased volume of admissions for short inpatient lengths of stay or observation only admissions can be an indicator of difficulty coping in the home, substance use, or even domestic violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your healthcare vendor what they are doing to mitigate and manage these admissions Ask them what care management plans are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the member while ensuring optimal plan administration
Telehealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an increase in visits? Are the same members returning for repeat visits or sessions? Are anti-anxiety or antidepressants being prescribed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the average number of telehealth behavioral health visits is higher than 4, this may indicate an opportunity for an EAP program that can save the plan money while providing therapeutic services to employees and their dependents

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OPTIMATUM'S SUPPORT TEAM

Dr. Edwards is our new Executive Client Optimization Officer bringing 30+ years of experience in health care data and analytics, absence and disability management, managed care and direct clinical practice. She applies her multi-disciplinary insight to Optimatum's HR vendor management service models using data-driven solutions to strategically align stakeholders and vendors.



Optimatum Insights



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Optimatum is the leading vendor management firm for the HR Supply Chain. Since 2007, we deliver robust solutions in the areas of Employer Sponsored Healthcare, Retirement, HR Systems and M&A/ Transitional Services.

Our end-to-end solutions answer the most pressing issues faced by employers in HR today, improving financial and operational plan performance through forensic analysis, vendor relationship realignment and ongoing vendor management