

COVID-19 & Behavioral Health Indicators

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. Find some helpful metrics to track and compare on the next page.

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 antianxiety 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

ABOUT OPTIMATUM

Optimatum is a vendor management firm that focuses exclusively on the HR supply chain with turnkey solutions that improve the financial, operating performance, transparency and accountability of HR Benefit programs while still maintaining existing vendor relationships.

Our support of the HR workstream during the M&A lifecycle encompasses operational due diligence, day-one readiness and post day-one synergies. We assist sponsors in leveraging the aggregate purchasing power of their portfolio to capture value and drive margin expansion.