



Meeting the mental health crisis with a more engaging behavioral health experience

UnitedHealthcare finds success engaging employees directly around their behavioral health and supporting them with a guided experience.

Ninety percent of Americans surveyed think there is a mental health crisis in the U.S. today, and that crisis is spilling into the workplace.¹

Depression and anxiety, for instance—which affected 4 in 10 U.S. adults during the pandemic²—can lead to decreased productivity and motivation at work.³ Breaking down that impact to employers even further, approximately 12B working days are lost annually due to common mental health issues, costing the global economy \$1T each year.⁴

These staggering statistics are the reason many employers are looking to expand their behavioral health offerings. In fact, 77% of employers said they plan to offer mental health support to their employees.⁶

But just because an employer offers behavioral health benefits doesn't mean employees will utilize them. Building awareness and keeping employees engaged with those benefits can be critical to meeting the mental health crisis.



90%

of Americans think there is a mental health crisis¹



1 in 5

Americans live with a mental illness⁵

Identifying opportunities to better engage employees

Lack of awareness and understanding often prevent employees from utilizing their benefits. More than half of Americans surveyed said they don't fully understand what their current health plan offers, and a similar percentage don't feel they are getting the most out of the benefits available to them.⁷

Employers play a crucial role in helping drive awareness and education around the health benefits they offer, as well as encouraging and empowering their employees to leverage what's available to them.

In fact, two-thirds of employees surveyed said they want their employer to provide better and more consistent benefit education throughout the year.⁸ This is especially important in the mental health space.

Over the last year, 1 in 4 Americans surveyed reported needing mental health care or medication but didn't get it.¹ Although cost is one of the most cited reasons why people forgo care or medication, stigma and access are other common justifications.¹

Mental health is also a sensitive topic that many employers may not know how to address or feel uncomfortable addressing with their employees. But closing those gaps doesn't rest solely on employers.

Prior to 2022, UnitedHealthcare provided employers, brokers and consultants fliers and other materials that they could distribute to employees about its different behavioral health solutions, but UnitedHealthcare realized there was an opportunity to engage employees more directly.

"Behavioral health can be a difficult subject for employers to address with their employees," says Kelley Thomes Ries, vice president of member marketing for UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual. "We've taken some of the onus off them by engaging their employees more directly via the UnitedHealthcare brand to provide support, guidance and awareness of the behavioral health benefits available to them."

The first step UnitedHealthcare took was to understand why members were not utilizing their behavioral health benefits. One of the main findings was that many employees were unsure of where to turn for behavioral health support or what resources and solutions their employer offered as part of their benefits package. Examples of what some employees may say include:

"I don't know where to start, so it's easier to ignore my mental health."

"I don't know exactly what I'm feeling, so I'll wait until I have symptoms and then I'll react."

"My experience often feels disconnected — in person, on the phone, online and within apps."

"My first encounter is often with a medical or behavioral provider."



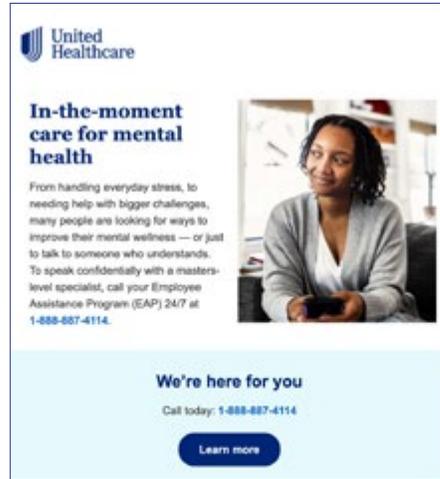
Driving utilization through targeted communications

To address these challenges, UnitedHealthcare developed targeted communications that worked to drive greater awareness and understanding of the various behavioral health solutions available to members. This included emails, fliers and brochures, among other tactics.

Flier



Email



The results

After running a variety of campaigns, these communications led to increased engagement and utilization with behavioral health tools among employees, saving an estimated \$2.2M.⁹

On one campaign, these efforts drove 27K visits to myuhc.com[®] and 7K visits to the Care Explorer experience within myuhc.com. Other campaigns generated more than 2.7K [Sanvello](https://www.sanvello.com)[™] premium app registrations and delivered nearly 500 new enrollees in the [AbleTo](https://www.ableto.com)[®] Virtual Behavioral Coaching & Therapy program.⁹

One employer group population even saw an 85% increase in its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) utilization and a 5,425% increase in behavioral health virtual visits claimants year over year after a multi-channel campaign that involved a recurring email, self-mailer and postcard.¹⁰

Results of various UnitedHealthcare behavioral health member communication efforts in 2022:⁹

4.1K

engagements within their EAP program

27K

visits to myuhc.com

7K

visits to the Care Explorer page within myuhc.com

2.7K+

[Sanvello](https://www.sanvello.com) premium app registrations

≈ 500

[AbleTo](https://www.ableto.com) Virtual Behavioral Coaching & Therapy program enrollees

\$2.2M

in estimated savings



Maintaining engagement through guided digital experiences

Once a member engaged with those targeted communications, it was important that the experience continued and felt connected, guiding employees through every step of their behavioral health care journey.

In some circumstances, that meant developing intermediary landing pages that provided additional information or details about behavioral health topics, such as **anxiety** and **depression**. This helped bridge the gap for employees, allowing them to learn more before jumping into a tool, which can be an overwhelming experience for members.

“We found that when members clicked an email and landed on **myuhc.com**, they weren’t ready to log in,” says Thomes Ries. “They were a little timid and needed more information first.”

UnitedHealthcare also made significant enhancements to its digital behavioral health experience in 2022. This included creating a guided, interactive experience that recommends certain resources, tools or programs based on an employee’s unique behavioral health concerns.

By categorizing the severity of issue an employee may be experiencing into low, moderate or high, as well as considering if an employee is engaging on behalf of themselves, as a caregiver or part of a family unit, UnitedHealthcare is able to deliver a more personalized experience.

A recent survey provides additional context on the prevalence of those severity levels among employees:¹¹

- 38% had a low mental health risk
- 42% had a moderate mental health risk
- 21% had a severe mental health risk

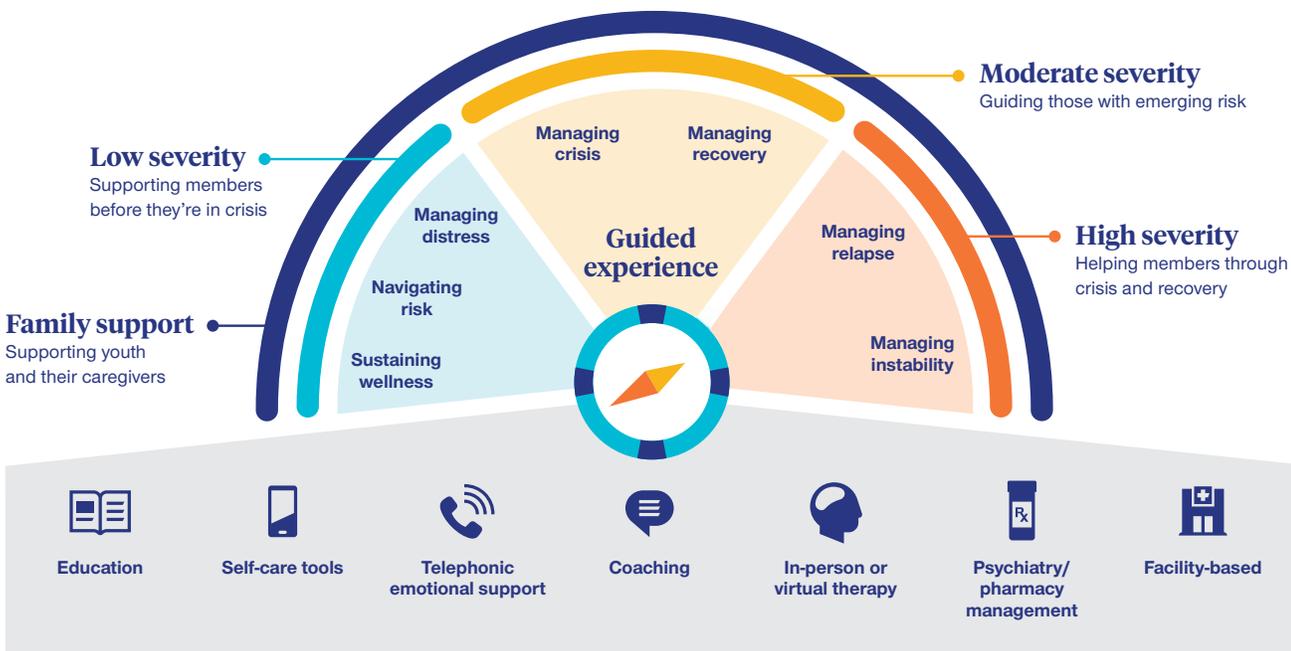
For instance, even though an employee may think a psychiatrist is the best fit for them, especially given “psychiatrist” is a top searched term, that may not always be the case.

Using data-driven algorithms, UnitedHealthcare recommends care based on that employee’s specific severity level and accommodates any changes that may occur over time. One algorithm, for example, can be used to engage members with chronic conditions who may have unmet mental well-being concerns.

“We know that employees bring their mental health concerns to work with them,” says Trevor Porath, vice president of behavioral health solutions at UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual. “Understanding their challenges and providing them solutions that meet them where they are can improve mental health outcomes while also reducing lost work time and employee stress.”

UnitedHealthcare will continue to advance its engagement strategy to reach the right members at the right time, using data-driven campaigns that consider the member from a whole-person health perspective.

UnitedHealthcare behavioral health care continuum



Learn more

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

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¹ Lopes, L., Kirzinger, A., Sparks, G., Stokes, M., Brodie, M. KFF/CNN Mental Health in America Survey. Kaiser Family Foundation, Oct. 5, 2022. Available: <https://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-cnn-mental-health-in-america-survey-findings/>.

² The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use. Kaiser Family Foundation, Mar. 20, 2023. Available: <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use>.

³ Mental Health and Productivity. Psychology Today. Available: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/productivity/mental-health-and-productivity>.

⁴ Mental health at work. World Health Organization, Sept. 28, 2022. Available: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work>.

⁵ Mental illness. National Institute of Mental Health, Mar. 2023. Available: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>.

⁶ The State of Employee Mental Health in an Uncertain World. Based on a commissioned survey conducted by Forrester Consulting. Modern Health, Sept. 2022. Available: https://join.modernhealth.com/rs/783-NRS-103/images/Employee_Mental_Health_Uncertain_World_Forrester_Modern_Health_2022_Report.pdf.

⁷ 2022 Health Insurance Knowledge Snapshot. Commissioned by Justworks and conducted by Harris Poll, June 2022. Available: <https://www.justworks.com/lp/benefits-knowledge-snapshot>.

⁸ 2021 Emerging from the Pandemic Survey. Willis Towers Watson, Feb 2021. Available: <https://www.wtco.com/en-US/Insights/2021/02/2021-emerging-from-the-pandemic-survey>.

⁹ UnitedHealthcare 2022 Behavioral Health Communications internal report. Results reported by the UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual Member Marketing team.

¹⁰ UnitedHealthcare 2022 case study. Results reported by the UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual Engagement Solutions team.

¹¹ The Mental Health Index. TELUS Health, Jan. 2023. Available: <https://lifeworks.com/en/media/1640/download>.

These case studies are true but identifying characteristics have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Savings calculated on book-of-business case rate savings for these programs. Savings for enrolled members are case specific. Results will vary based on client specific demographics and plan design.

The Sanvello Mobile Application should not be used for urgent care needs. If you are experiencing a crisis or need emergency care, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The information contained in the Sanvello Mobile Application is for educational purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose problems or provide treatment and should not be used as a substitute for your provider's care. Please discuss with your doctor how the information provided may be right for you. Premium access is available for members at no additional cost as part of their benefit plan. Sanvello premium is not available for all groups in New York and is subject to change. Refer to your plan documents for specific benefit coverage and limitations or call the toll-free member phone number on your health plan ID card. Participation in the program is voluntary and subject to the terms of use contained in the Application.

The AbleTo mobile application should not be used for urgent care needs. If you are experiencing a crisis or need emergency care, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The Self Care information contained in the AbleTo mobile application is for educational purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose problems or provide treatment and should not be used on its own as a substitute for care from a provider. AbleTo Self Care is available to members ages 13+ at no additional cost as part of your benefit plan. Self Care is not available for all groups in District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia or West Virginia and is subject to change. Refer to your plan documents for specific benefit coverage and limitations or call the toll-free member phone number on your health plan ID card. Participation in the program is voluntary and subject to the terms of use contained in the mobile application.

Family Support Program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. 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 its components may not be available in all states or for all group sizes and are subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

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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