



FAQ for Optum clients: COVID-19 and temporary virtual visit policies

Effective as of July 24, 2020

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause illness in both animals and people. The 2003 SARS outbreak, also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, is a well-known coronavirus. In January of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a new coronavirus outbreak, now called COVID-19, which was first detected in China.

What is Optum Behavioral Health doing to address COVID-19?

Optum is devoting significant effort and resources to responding to this serious situation. We are closely monitoring COVID-19 developments and have teams of clinical and operational experts working around the clock to mitigate risks. As necessary, we will share more specifics on actions we are taking.

We are complying with all guidance and protocols issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and state and local public health departments. In addition, we are actively partnering with federal and state health agencies to support development of policies and stay ahead of relevant regulatory requirements.

How is Optum Behavioral Health supporting members during this time?

Optum is dedicated to supporting all community members throughout this difficult time. We have opened an **Emotional Support Help Line** for anyone who may be experiencing anxiety or stress about COVID-19. This resource can be reached at **(866) 342-6892**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is open to all.

Since March 19, we have temporarily provided **complimentary Premium access to Sanvello** to members who did not already have it as part of their UHC plan, to help them cope with anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis. Members can download the Sanvello app using the links at <https://www.sanvello.com/coronavirus-anxiety-support>. Access to the Premium version of Sanvello ended June 30, 2020 for non-eligible UnitedHealthcare plan members. Premium access to Sanvello will continue to be available to:

- UnitedHealthcare E&I ASO
- UnitedHealthcare E&I Fully Insured (45 states) clients/members with Optum Behavioral Health administered on UNET, PRIME and ACIS platforms. (except in MD, NY, D.C., VA, and WV. See “Exclusions” below.)

Please note: **In order to maintain Premium access to the Sanvello app after June 30, 2020, eligible UHC members must register** using their UnitedHealthcare medical insurance card. Eligible members who have not registered using their insurance information will need to adjust their account appropriately to maintain free access to Sanvello Premium. **Non-eligible members will have to pay to continue their Premium access to the Sanvello app after June 30, 2020.**

Exclusions for continuation of Premium access to Sanvello:

- UnitedHealthcare Fully Insured plans issued to clients/members in MD, NY, D.C., VA, and WV. The five states are slated to launch Sanvello premium per state approvals on January 1, 2021.
- Oxford, UMR, Sierra, Harvard Pilgrim, Pacificare, NHP, River Valley, NICE.

We are encouraging providers and members to observe social distancing, isolation and quarantine rules as outlined by the CDC. In order to make it easier for our members to continue to receive appropriate outpatient behavioral support during this time, we are encouraging providers and members to use **secure video-enabled virtual visits**. Optum is supplying a platform for providers to conduct secure video visits with members who cannot travel to an office.

For members or providers who do not have access to secure video technology, they may conduct their **sessions via telephone**.

How is Optum working with providers to enable video-enabled and telephonic visits?

Providers that are currently not a part of our Virtual Visit network may apply to be included in that directory. However, during the nationwide public health emergency, providers do not need to undergo the Optum virtual visits application process to provide telehealth or virtual visit care.

Consistent with an applicable [Notice of Enforcement Discretion](#) from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Health and Human Services, **Optum is temporarily expanding our policy to enable any of our qualified and licensed behavioral health care providers to deliver telephonic and telehealth care to Optum Behavioral Health plan members.**

The [OCR Notice](#) contains information regarding applications that may be used to provide telehealth without risk that OCR might seek to impose a penalty for noncompliance with the HIPAA rules related to the good faith provision of telehealth

during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency.

Participating providers are responsible for making decisions about these tools. Some tools may only be temporarily approved for virtual visit care during the COVID-19 crisis. It's likely that policies will change once things return to normal. Note that providers should also consider other potentially applicable federal and state privacy laws that could impact this temporary accommodation.

How is Optum communicating to members about COVID-19?

Optum has posted an online COVID-19 resource page that includes educational links on the COVID-19 pandemic, tips for coping with the current national emergency, as well as information and instructions on how to access helpful services such as the Emotional Helpline and behavioral health virtual visits. This page can be accessed from a prominent link on the home page of our member portal: www.liveandworkwell.com. Members are not required to log on to the site to reach these resources.

Are there any materials on COVID-19 that I can provide to my members/employees?

Optum has prepared downloadable and printable educational materials and tip sheets, including:

- COVID-19 FAQs
- Virtual visit service flyer and FAQs
- Tip sheets on managing COVID-19 anxiety, maintaining good mental health, helping children and older adults while in quarantine, and managing the stress of having to work from home.

These can be found on a dedicated [Employee Assistance Program resource page](#), which is a one of the resource links on the online COVID-19 resource page on liveandworkwell.com.

How many providers do we have in our virtual visits network?

Optum Behavioral Health currently has over 10,000 providers in the virtual visits network.

What are you doing to meet the increasing demand of members?

The temporary expansion of our telehealth policy to enable any of our behavioral health care providers to deliver telephonic and virtual visit sessions through October 22, 2020 should help increase access to behavioral health care for Optum members who need it. We are also working on recruitment measures to continue to grow the network in order to meet the growing needs of our members.

How does a member find a virtual visit provider?

Members have options to seek care, to ensure that their provider meets their needs.

All available providers are available through the provider search function on liveandworkwell.com (under “Find a Resource,” select “Virtual Visits”). Members can schedule a virtual visit appointment online on liveandworkwell if the provider offers that capability. With providers that cannot offer online scheduling, members can schedule an appointment by calling them directly.

Members can also schedule a behavioral health appointment through Doctor On Demand or TalkSpace.

Members can also call the “mental health” number on the back of their health benefit ID card to ask one of our specialists to find a virtual visit provider that can address their needs.

What date did COVID-19 telehealth benefits begin?

March 19, 2020

How is Optum Behavioral Health supporting members who receive treatment other than outpatient visits (such as intensive outpatient and partial hospitalization)?

Optum Behavioral Health has approved Partial Hospitalization and Intensive Outpatient programs to be conducted via telehealth until October 22, 2020. Additionally, we have approved ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) services to be conducted via telehealth during this time.

How is Optum Behavioral Health working with network facilities to ensure they are following CDC guidelines?

Per the terms of our provider network agreement, Optum providers are required to follow all federal and state regulations. If there are any violations or quality concerns, these would be reviewed and the appropriate action would be taken by the appropriate Optum quality committee.

Will Optum waive copay/deductible/coinsurance for all telehealth services?

From March 31, 2020 until September 30, 2020, Optum is waiving copay, deductible, and coinsurance fees for outpatient behavioral health telehealth services provided to UnitedHealthcare members by an Optum in-network provider. For inpatient, residential services, or other non-outpatient services, or if the individual chooses an out-of-network provider, a copay or coinsurance fee may still apply. This applies to UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual (Commercial) and UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement (Medicare Advantage) only. UnitedHealthcare Community & State (Medicaid) will adhere to state regulations.

Is Optum anticipating a surge in behavioral health care use as states begin to open back up?

Yes. We expect that there will be a significant increase in the number of individuals seeking behavioral health care related to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Our current projections suggest that outpatient utilization will start to increase in May and June, with a rise in both inpatient and outpatient usage in the mid-summer months, with more full utilization of services by August to October.¹

Optum has modeled out care utilization scenarios based on the best available scientific research, as well as insights from our clinical team. We are also monitoring actual utilization and call center volume on an hourly basis to see how those numbers match our model. Leveraging this information into specially built algorithms, we will be able to spot trends of increased utilization early and adjust our staffing to ensure that we can continue to meet the needs of our members.

¹ Predictions are made based on current available data and are subject to change as COVID-19 evolves.

Are there plans to develop a member-facing communication to address the possible stigma associated with COVID-19?

Work has commenced to help identify key topics to include in a 'returning to the workplace' communication for COVID-19 survivors and their coworkers. Details will be shared as the communication is developed and released.

Optum is continually monitoring this situation and will update these FAQs accordingly.



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