

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted mental health in unprecedented ways.

This ebook outlines how the pandemic has affected mental health needs such as substance use, anxiety and depression. Read on to hear stories about employees' experiences and how they found the support they needed.



Section 1

Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

See how Peter received support for alcoholism.



Section 2

Secondary stress of frontline workers

See how Maria coped with PTSD after being hospitalized for COVID-19.



Section 3

Addressing family mental health

See how Jamie found support for family and financial stress.



Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

Alcohol use has increased as Americans are coping with the stress of the pandemic.

Core substance use needs:

- Help managing stress and anxiety
- Psychiatric support
- Virtual clinical support
- Substance use peer support



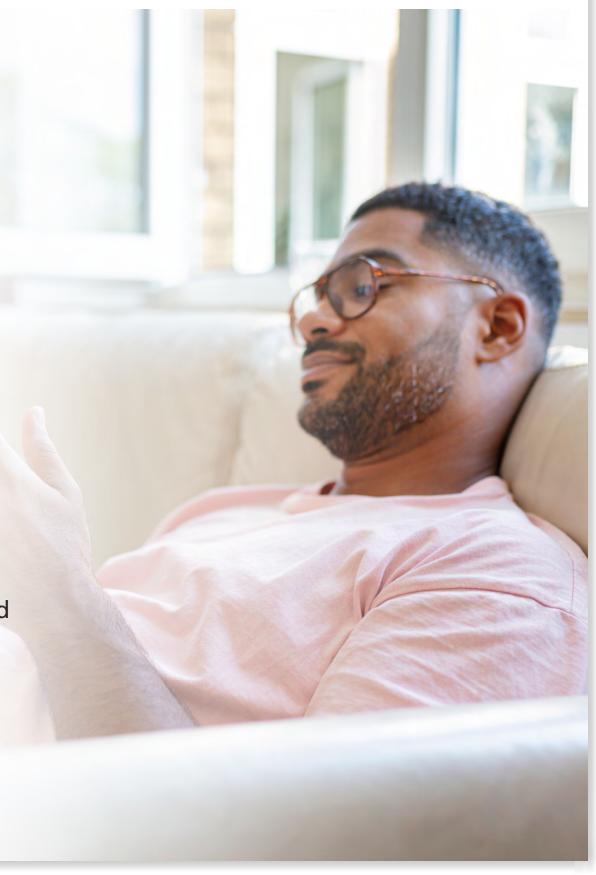
Calls and messages to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's hotline

grew **338**% in March 2020

from a month earlier.1



13% of adults reported new or increased substance use during the pandemic.²



Overcoming substance use during a pandemic



Member journey

Peter's story

Overcoming substance use during a pandemic

"During the isolation, I began struggling with alcohol again."

COVID-19 impact

Previously struggled with substance use and quarantine triggered use

Background

- Has struggled with alcohol addiction for over 7 years
- Highly functional with addiction
- Embarrassed by stigma of addiction
- Previously admitted to residential addiction program

Occupation

Project Manager

Core needs

- Substance use support
- Support for anxiety

Struggling with substance use



Peter is released from an inpatient addiction program.



Over the past year, Peter has participated in peer sobriety meetings as he works to overcome a 7-year addiction.

During the COVID-19 office closure, Peter starts working from home.

He begins drinking as a form of coping with boredom.

Overwhelmed with the being at home, Peter begins scheduling virtual happy hours; he increases his daily consumption of alcohol to 12 drinks a day.

Inpatient treatment

Noticing a change in

his performance and

calls, his teammate

asks him to consider

EAP services.

behavior during video



He enrolls in an inpatient addiction program.



Sustaining recovery

Peter's family attends group therapy where they discuss the impact of Peter's alcohol usage.



Because of his history with alcohol addiction, Peter's clinician inpatient recommends he be treatment readmitted to an inpatient program. treatment program.

Peter successfully completes the

Afraid that Peter may relapse, his wife suggests attending therapy to help with his illness.

Peter continues to receive support from his peer group and family while also using apps to help cope.

Fictitious individuals used for illustrative purposes.

Secondary stress of frontline workers

Secondary stress of frontline workers

Frontline workers have faced immense pressure, heightened stress and new risks throughout the pandemic.

Frontline worker needs:

- Overcoming stigma of mental health needs
- Managing burnout
- Proactive support
- Help understanding secondary post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)



Secondary stress of frontline workers



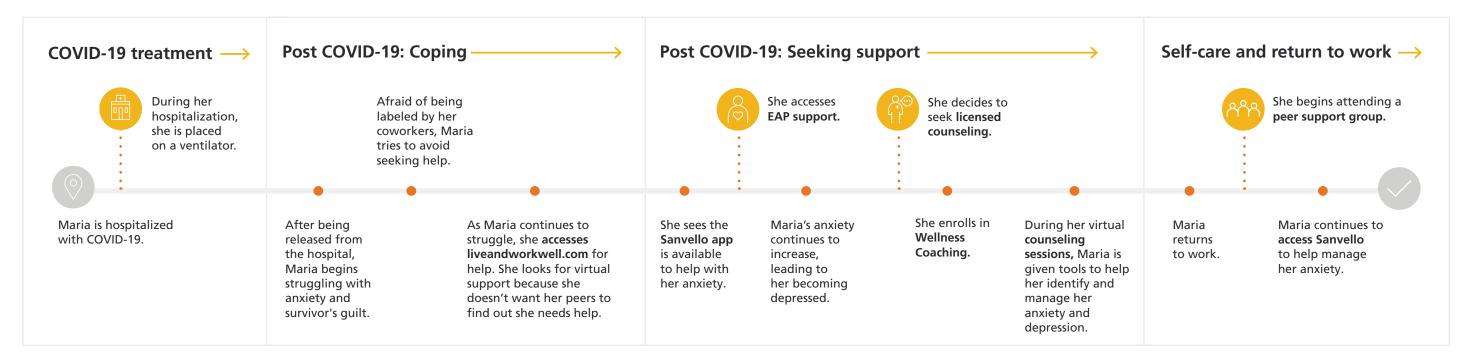
Member journey

Maria's story

PTSD after surviving COVID-19

"I almost died. I don't feel like I should be here."

Stress of being a first responder Support frontline response to COVID-19 in a metropolitan area • Stressed due to the demands of the job and inadequate rest • Tested positive for COVID-19 and was hospitalized Core needs Registered nurse Help with PTSD and stress management • Support for mental health after hospitalization • Coping with secondary traumatic stress resulting from exposure to another



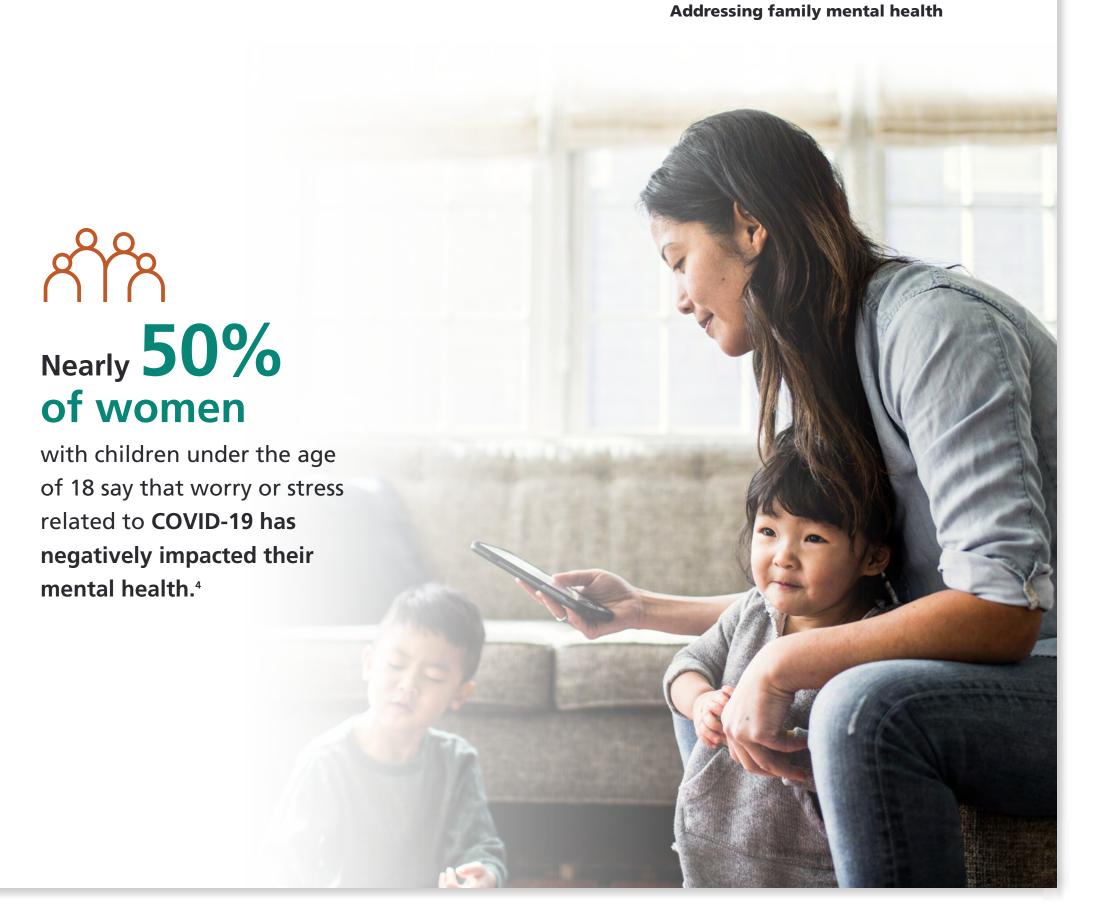
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Addressing family mental health

With disruptions to schools and businesses across America, families have had to adjust to new routines.

Core family needs:

- Support with parental stress
- Guidance on mental health for kids and teens
- Financial strain on household
- Anxiety of keeping multiple family members safe and healthy



Addressing family mental health



Member journey

Jamie's story

Handling family and financial stress

"I am struggling to handle all of the uncertainty."

Financial strain and access to safe childcare Core needs Hospitality Background Was furloughed Manages a 6-person household (2 children with severe conditions) Core needs Help dealing with stress caused by financial strain Support for managing depression Awareness of mental health resources

Experiencing financial and family stress Finding support and managing stress Jamie begins teaching her three Jamie starts doing some Jamie starts school-aged kids as well as to struggle mindfulness activities she taking care of her newborn. with sleeping found on the Sanvello app. and eating. She adds meditation to her During the COVID-19 Jamie is usually able to She begins having Jamie remembers Jamie downloads the After learning about handle her stress but meditation, Jamie routine to help manage pandemic, Jamie's moderate anxiety. seeing an email about Sanvello app and is company furloughs feels overwhelmed about an app that could help happy to learn it is free. identifies what causes her anxiety and uses her job status and lack her cope; she visits her anxiety to increase. liveandworkwell.com to workers. of childcare. liveandworkwell.com find childcare resources. to learn more.

Fictitious individuals used for illustrative purposes.

For more information on how Optum can help support employee mental health needs,

contact your Optum representative or visit optum.com/behavioralhealth.

Sources

- 1. ABC. Calls to US helpline jump 891%, as White House is warned of mental health crisis. April 7, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
- 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic United States, June 24–30, 2020. August 14, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
- 3. NBC New York. Mount Sinai takes on mental health impact of COVID-19 crisis among health workers. April 30, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.
- 4. Kaiser Family Foundation. The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use. February 10, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2021.



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