



# Substance use disorders

How to effectively combat the rising human and financial tolls



More than **20 million Americans ages 12 and older live with a substance use disorder (SUD)** and millions more misuse alcohol, prescription medications or illicit drugs each year, putting them at risk for addiction.<sup>1</sup>

In the United States excessive alcohol use is a leading cause of preventable death – and opioid overdose deaths have reached an all-time high.<sup>2,3</sup> Furthermore, substance use is rising.

The tragic human toll, the estimated cost of SUDs in terms of lost productivity at work, health care and legal expenses is **more than \$740 billion a year and growing.**<sup>5</sup> Other societal costs include crime, unemployment, domestic violence, divorce and homelessness.

While significant progress is being made in terms of the number of available tools and types of evidence-based care, too few people are accessing them. Across the substance use and addiction spectrum, the vast majority of individuals – including **over 87% living with SUDs – do not get the quality care they need.**<sup>6</sup> Some are unable to find or access treatment that meets their needs. And those who seek help are sometimes lured into costly out-of-network facilities that emphasize amenities rather than quality of care – and offer no proven clinical advantages.



## 13%

of Americans started or increased alcohol and substance use in response to uncertainty and stress during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>



While many others do not even seek care due to potential stigmatization. Many people in the public, including those in health care and the justice system, view SUDs as a result of moral weakness and flawed character.<sup>7</sup> However, this perspective is inaccurate – and seriously harmful – as it deters people from seeking and receiving the quality care they need.

## Understanding substance use disorders

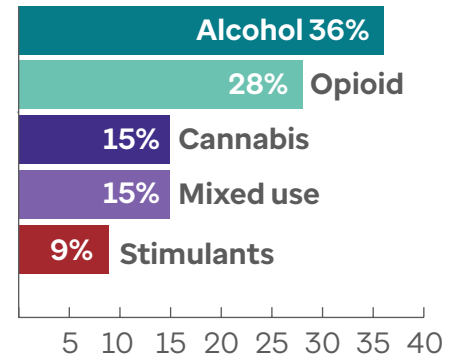
SUDs are highly complex conditions that can affect virtually anyone. The American Medical Association and other leading health care organizations classify addiction as a disease. Furthermore, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “susceptibility to the brain changes in addiction are substantially influenced by factors outside an individual’s control, such as genetics or the environment in which one is born and raised, and...medical care is often necessary to facilitate recovery as well as avert the worst outcomes like overdose.”<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, the most common SUD is alcohol use disorder, followed by opioid, cannabis (marijuana) and stimulant use disorders. For reference, Optum claims data from June 2021 through May 2022 shows alcohol use disorder represents 36% of claimants seeking treatment for an SUD, while opioid use disorder represents 28%, cannabis use disorder 15%, mixed use 15%, and stimulants 9%.<sup>10</sup>

With access to the right level of care and support, individuals with these and other SUDs may achieve stabilization, build resiliency and sustain recovery.

## Substance use disorders in the United States

(Optum claims data June 2021 - May 2022)



## Treating substance use disorders

Optum invests significant resources to ensure its network providers meet high standards and are held accountable for the quality of care they deliver. We compare clinical performance and the cost of care among its network providers to enable members to identify top-performing programs. For example, the Platinum program uses advanced data analytics to rate the performance of in-network behavioral health treatment facilities for quality of care, specialty and efficiency in treatment outcomes. This is similar to the methodology used to identify Centers of Excellence for medical care, such as for cancer treatment, hip and joint replacement, or transplant programs.

Optum® Behavioral Health offers evidence-based resources and support to meet the unique needs of members and their families. Substance use treatment, like the treatment for many chronic medical diseases, requires an individualized treatment plan based on a comprehensive range of evidence-based treatment options, including:

- Behavioral counseling
- Medication
- Medical devices and applications used to treat withdrawal symptoms or deliver skills training
- Evaluation and treatment for co-occurring mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety
- Long-term follow-up to prevent relapse

Our approach combines a compassionate team of care advocates and peer support specialists, innovative analytics and programs that build relationships with members, providers and their communities. By identifying those at risk and improving access, Optum helps connect members to the level of care they need, while contributing to better overall outcomes and a lower total cost of care.

Furthermore, getting evidence-based treatment from in-network providers improves the likelihood that patients will have the support systems, community resources and regular touch points that are vital to sustaining recovery.

## The importance of in-network care

For SUDs, out-of-network treatment represents significantly higher readmission rates along with much higher costs.

Many out-of-network facilities are located in states with favorable climates, like California, Florida and Texas, and use sophisticated marketing tactics, pay for referral brokers, and make clinically unproven claims of providing superior treatment to lure prospective participants. In actuality, these **“destination”-type programs tend to have higher costs and lower efficacy – 30-day and 90-day readmission rates are 112% to 170% higher per year** for commercial members discharged from out-of-network residential treatment programs, compared with in-network facility discharges.<sup>13</sup>

## The right care at the right time

Optum provides an evidence-based SUD strategy across the continuum of care that:

**Identifies** – We apply analytics for early intervention. This includes providing screening and intervention tools to clinicians, plus self-assessment tools.

**Engages** – We connect members to evidence-based care, treatment referrals, educational tools and support resources.

**Guides** – We promote recovery with ongoing support, including digital tools and recovery plans, utilizing peer-led support when indicated, to help build resiliency and address barriers and social determinants of health.

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Optum Behavioral Health brings clinical expertise to connect members to personalized, evidence-based treatment for SUD and co-occurring mental health conditions. Expert advocates can guide members and families to the most appropriate care for their situation at a pace that works for them at **treatmentatlas.org**. In addition, for members who initially prefer a self-guided approach, an online assessment tool (ATLAS) is available through [shatterproof.org](http://shatterproof.org) to help them gauge the level of care they may need.



### Substance Use Disorder Helpline

Members and their families can get immediate, locally based provider referrals and other confidential assistance 24/7 by phone at no additional cost at **1-855-780-5955**. Callers can remain anonymous during the interaction. The substance use recovery advocate will take the time to fully understand each individual’s situation and guide them to the next steps most helpful to them. They also will provide expert decision support so individuals can better understand treatment options and provider types, and arrange a face-to-face evaluation with a trusted, licensed substance use treatment professional, typically within 24 hours.



### Facility Benefit Inquiry Program

Members are better able to sustain long-term recovery with an established support system close to home. Optum care advocates guide individuals to local, in-network, evidence-based options for SUD care.



Treatment with out-of-state, **out-of-network programs are 104% higher cost** for 90-day episodes of care.<sup>12</sup>



# 90%

of individuals who identify themselves when calling the Substance Use Disorder Helpline use in-network treatment, leading to better outcomes and a lowered total cost of care.<sup>8</sup>



### Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)

MAT is an evidence-based treatment that combines FDA-approved medications with counseling, behavioral therapy and recovery support. It can lower the risk of overdose, relieve cravings and promote healing. Members are connected to local high-quality services nearby. Optum bundles member rates and streamlines invoicing to make it easier for members to engage in and access care.



### RecoveryGo

Delivered virtually, Hazelden Betty Ford's RecoveryGo® solution provides outpatient addiction and mental health care, recovery support resources, family services and community solutions directly to members, on demand. From members looking to find new ways to cope with anxiety and stress to those seeking treatment for an SUD, we offer a full suite of solutions ranging from evidence-based self-help tools and virtual coaching to in-network providers delivering inpatient and outpatient care at [hazeldenbettyford.org](http://hazeldenbettyford.org).



# 96%

of our members are within **20 miles of an in-network MAT provider.**<sup>11</sup>

**For more information contact your Optum Behavioral Health account executive or visit [optum.com/behavioralhealth](http://optum.com/behavioralhealth)**

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