


Behavioral health challenges

Improving health among older adults with companion care



Behavioral health problems are common among older adults, with one in five reporting behavioral health disorders like anxiety and depression.¹ Companion care can help health plans proactively identify and treat these conditions.

13%

Costs associated with treating mental health disorders and related conditions account for approximately 13% of Medicare spending.²



Conditions that drive up health care costs

When older adults living alone develop behavioral health disorders, their problems may go undiagnosed. Late-stage diagnoses are associated with higher health care costs. Identifying and treating these conditions at an early stage is key to reducing costs and avoiding critical health situations.

Older adults with depression have longer hospital stays, higher outpatient costs, and seek care for other medical conditions more often than their peers. Among people with chronic diseases, health care costs nearly doubled for patients with comorbidities of mental health disorders compared to those without.³ Treating behavioral health conditions in Medicare beneficiaries early on can reduce health care costs significantly.⁴

papa



Case Study

Companion care for behavioral health



Anna B. had a virtual visit with a Papa Pal and shared suicidal ideations. Her Papa Pal escalated the call to Papa, who soon learned that Anna was being evicted from her apartment and was so distraught she had taken 180 aspirin pills that morning.



papa

Pal Power:

Remaining on the phone with Anna, Papa used a different line to call 911 while engaging Anna in conversation to ensure she didn't hang up before an ambulance arrived. Once the medical team showed up at Anna's apartment, Papa spoke to an agent at her health plan who ensured she would have a safe place to stay after she was discharged from the hospital.

“Because mental health is essential to overall health and well-being, it must be recognized and treated in all Americans, including older adults, with the same urgency as physical health.”

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



We're here to address SDoH-related disparities

Papa is a companion care service that provides older adults with the assistance they need to overcome challenges related to SDoH, such as social support, transportation, and food security. Leading Medicare Advantage plans offer Papa as a supplemental benefit to address social needs.

Trained to step in and fill the gaps when they see an individual's social needs are unmet, our national network of vetted Papa Pals helps members with:

- Companionship, conversation, board games, movies, walks, gardening, grocery shopping, and more
- Health care and benefits navigation, and scheduling wellness appointments
- Transportation to visit friends, to events, and doctor's appointments
- Assistance with technology, telehealth and remote care, and communicating virtually with others

Papa's services are built on trust, friendship, and companionship—exactly the kind of support that older adults need to overcome SDoH challenges and live healthier lives. Members value how Papa helps them live where and how they choose, while health plans benefit from reduced disparities and costs.

97%

of older adults with behavioral health disorders do not seek professional help.⁶

+51%

Health care costs for older adults with depression compared to their peers.⁸

-4%

Average reduction in total health care costs when depression is treated.⁷

- 1 American Psychological Association
- 2 JAMA Network
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Avalere
- 5 CDC
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Avalere
- 8 National Library of Medicine



For more on Papa and companion care, download our guide: [Why Health Plans Need to Invest in Companion Care](#)

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