



## LifeSolutions: Integrating care for better outcomes

Mentions of behavioral health conditions are increasingly prevalent in today's narrative — and with good reason. Nearly one in five American adults struggle with a mental health condition or substance use disorder.<sup>1</sup> The conversation around behavioral health has especially shifted for benefit plan sponsors, who are increasingly recognizing the profound connection between behavioral and medical conditions.

For example, individuals suffering from common chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, respiratory illness or musculoskeletal conditions may also experience anxiety and depression. Too often, these behavioral conditions are underdiagnosed or unaddressed, and affected individuals are more likely to have poor overall health, be less productive at work and miss more work due to health-related challenges — driving up the total cost of care. On average, 14% of a patient population has related medical and behavioral conditions.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this population accounts for 28% of the total health care spending within an average population.<sup>3</sup>

When behavioral and physical needs are better managed, employees experience better overall health, a lower total cost of care and greater productivity at work.

### **A program that makes a difference**

LifeSolutions is a telephonic behavioral coaching program that provides a holistic approach to supporting individuals with co-occurring behavioral and medical conditions — and it's available at no added cost to eligible individuals. Unlike many other solutions where people are routed to a non-licensed support representative, LifeSolutions connects individuals with a licensed — master's level or higher — clinician called a Life Coach. A dedicated Life Coach works with individuals throughout their journey and helps identify goals and resources unique to their situation in order to address behavioral health concerns and provide tools to better manage medical conditions.

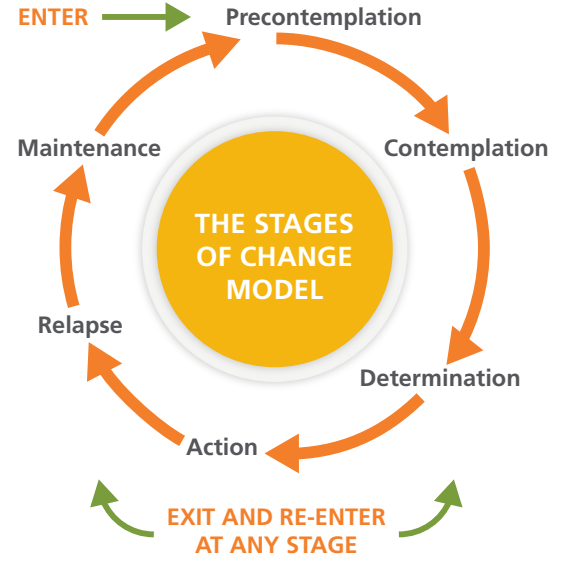


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Throughout the program, Life Coaches utilize motivational interviewing techniques, teach coping skills, facilitate connections to community resources and support groups, work with members to identify and achieve their goals, and provide support and reinforcement as needed. In addition, Life Coaches actively collaborate with medical case managers and encourage individuals to adhere to medication and treatment plans. Life Coaches also perform assessments and screenings for depression, anxiety, substance use disorders and other conditions if applicable.

This flexible and personalized approach results in tailored treatment based on the “stages of change” model. This approach, often used in smoking-cessation programs, is an evidence-based model that assesses an individual’s readiness to make behavioral changes. It then provides strategies to guide the individual’s progression. Life Coaches use this model to identify the individual’s emotional state to provide specific interventions and reinforcement that improve the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Individuals engage with the program for an average of 80 days, with regularly scheduled calls every one to four weeks, based on their needs. However, there is no limit to the program’s duration — the Life Coach and the individual work together in the program until the individual’s needs are met.



### Promoting cross-functional partnerships

Most standalone wellness programs lack true collaboration and transparency between their medical and behavioral case management systems. LifeSolutions is different.

Collaboration is a hallmark of the program. LifeSolutions Life Coaches and medical case managers work together and benefit from a shared documentation system and regular touch points. A designated medical director is also engaged to support the Life Coaches, perform joint rounds and review complex cases.

LifeSolutions’ integrated approach is vital to successful condition management and whole-person care. It not only helps close gaps in care, but also ensures that individuals feel their best.

## Proven outcomes

### Lower cost of care

According to a recent Optum study, LifeSolutions contributed to 25% lower medical costs for participating members when combined with the Optum Medical Case Management (CM) program.<sup>4</sup>



**25%**

**LOWER MEDICAL COSTS**  
for members participating in LifeSolutions + Optum Medical CM program vs. Medical CM program alone

### MEDICAL EXPENSE 6-MONTH POST-INDEX



Optum Medical CM alone

Savings of **25%**  
 $p=0.0122$



LifeSolutions with Optum Medical CM

### Improved health

Individuals who took part in LifeSolutions significantly improved their PHQ-9 depression screening score. This set of scores compared favorably over the baseline scores that were reported before the program began.<sup>4</sup>



**~15%**

**SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT**  
in PHQ-9 (depression) scores

**LifeSolutions baseline to six-month follow-up<sup>5</sup>**

## How LifeSolutions works

### Program referral



Referral to LifeSolutions, usually from medical case manager

### Connect to a Life Coach



Behavioral Health Coordinator:

- Orients individual with the program
- Schedules first call with Life Coach

### Engage with Life Coach



Working with the individual, the Life Coach:

- Performs assessment and screenings for depression, anxiety and substance use, as appropriate
- Identifies gaps in, and barriers to, care
- Helps define long- and short-term goals
- Provides referrals and coordinates with other providers

Week 2

Referrals to EAP and BH/medical provider(s)



Provider(s), medical case manager and Life Coach collaborate

### Life Coach



- Monitors progress toward goals
- Provides support

Week 6



Life Coach discusses case with designated LifeSolutions medical director

Week 4

### Life Coach



- Follows-up on referrals
- Addresses gaps in care
- Formulates action plan with member



Referral to community resources

Week 8



Coordination between Life Coach and medical case manager

Week 10

### Case is closed out



Before a case is closed, the Life Coach will:

- Review goals and the individual's situation
- Identify any remaining gaps in care
- Follow-up on progress
- Re-screen to evaluate progress

## A coordinated approach that offers results in an evolving landscape

Optum recognizes the unique and changing needs of employers and benefit plan sponsors in today's competitive marketplace. We understand the intricate challenges of delivering quality benefits and managing costs for employee populations who may be experiencing higher levels of co-occurring medical and behavioral conditions.

When a cohesive and integrated approach is used to help manage and treat comorbid conditions, employees can experience better overall health outcomes, lower absenteeism and greater productivity at work. Together, employers and employees benefit from a program built to help close gaps in care, engage employees in their own wellness and lower the total cost of care.

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For more information, visit [optum.com/behavioralhealth](https://www.optum.com/behavioralhealth) or contact your Optum representative.

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Sources:

1. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2018. [samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHFFR2017/NSDUHFFR2017.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHFFR2017/NSDUHFFR2017.pdf).
2. Azocar F, Bargman EP, Smolskis JM, Groat TD. Enhanced Methodology for Estimating Integrated Medical-Behavioral Costs. Optum internal report. January 2017. Accessed February 28, 2020.
3. Ibid.
4. LifeSolutions program evaluation. Completed by Optum Healthcare Analytics, November 2019. Accessed March 2, 2020.
5. Ibid.



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