CHIEF EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fall is in full swing. The kids are back to school and a sense of normalcy is beginning to settle in after a long road to recovery. As we all continue to take precautions to ensure the safety of our communities, we cannot overlook the collective effect these past few years have had, and how much we will forever be changed as a result. The challenges however, brought along invaluable lessons learned, highlighting areas of opportunities to continue the work toward achieving better healthcare outcomes.

For the third quarter of the year, IAMHP took time to focus on behavioral health efforts underway in Illinois to help address the rising need for critical mental health services. Each quarter this year, IAMHP is highlighting a priority pillar for the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations and the state of Illinois. I couldn’t be prouder of our state's efforts in the behavioral health space to work towards providing better access to care to those who need it most. As the largest payer of behavioral healthcare services in the state, the Medicaid program remains committed to ensuring that every Illinoisian has access to the care they need.

Illinois’ support for recent policies to establish a program for mental health wellness checks in schools, as well as expand academic detailing support for behavioral health providers who care for patients with serious mental illness, and Medicaid coverage of substance use peer recovery specialists showcases the State's commitment to improving access to mental health services and enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of Medicaid members in Illinois.

Though the need is great, truly the efforts are greater. Medicaid Managed Care Organizations continue to move the ball forward through care coordination efforts with state and community partners to ensure we are identifying and meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. This work truly inspires hope for a brighter future where everyone can get the mental health support they deserve.

There will always be work to be done, but as always, I am hopeful that we are headed in the right direction.

In good health,
Samantha Olds Frey
CEO, IAMHP

At a glance...

1. 988
2. New Policy
3. Member Stories
4. Behavioral Health Toolkit
988 - The Launch of the National Suicide and Crisis Hotline

To ensure equitable access to mental health support, it is critical for Medicaid members to have easy-to-access resources where they can get help from qualified mental health professionals.

In July 2022, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline was implemented in Illinois and across the country as a new, easy-to-remember three-digit phone number where free and confidential support is available 24/7 nationwide for anyone experiencing a mental health or suicide crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress.

The new 988 Lifeline replaces the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255). This phone number remains in existence, and Medicaid members will be referred to 988 from that number.

What will happen when a member calls 988?
A member can contact the Lifeline by phone using 988. Text and chat are available at certain call center locations but will be expanded to all call centers at a later date.
Trained crisis counselors will help the individual and/or their family members through the crisis and, if appropriate, connect them with resources in their community. In some locations, it may also be possible to dispatch a mobile crisis team, if needed.

How does 988 compare to 911?
If a life-threatening crisis is underway (ex: a suicide attempt in progress), then 911 is the best number.
For individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts or experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, 988 provides a trained crisis counselor who can effectively deescalate the situation and provide connection to local resources.

To learn more about 988, visit:
- IL Dept. of Human Services Resource
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Reinventing Crisis Response
Children's Behavioral Health

At the state level, there is a Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation underway. This transformative effort is examining factors such as the needs of children requiring behavioral health services, resource availability, eligibility requirements for accessing care, infrastructure needs, best practices, and more, in order to transform the service system that supports children’s mental health.

The Pathways program is targeted to go live at the beginning of 2023. At that time, Care Coordination and Support Organizations (CCSOs) will begin to engage children and families in care coordination. CCSOs will provide care coordination and mobile crisis response for their designated service area.

Once the family is engaged in care coordination, the CCSO will work with the family to select a Child and Family Team and create their care plan to support them in meeting their goals.

The Pathways to Success program is one part of the state’s efforts to enhance the behavioral health system for children. The program was created for children with complex behavioral health needs to have access to home and community-based services. It is built upon an intensive model of care coordination that addresses the broad range of each child and family’s needs. The Pathways to Success program was designed to address many of the State’s commitments under the N.B. Consent Decree, which mandates that children under 21 on Medicaid who have been diagnosed with a mental health or behavioral disorder have access to a healthcare delivery model that provides the full continuum of Medicaid-covered behavioral health services.

To learn more, visit HFS’ Pathways to Success or check out episode 57 of our Sam Says Podcast on the N.B. Consent Decree.

"Not attending to our mental health conditions really worsens our physical health conditions, and not attending to our physical health conditions really worsens our mental health conditions."

Dr. Tom Allen, Executive Medical Director of Behavioral Health at BCBSIL, and Chief Psychiatrist for the BCBSIL Medicaid plan
Did you miss it?

Catch up on all of the behavioral health content IAMHP shared out over the last quarter!

COMPLIMENTARY WEBINARS

Health Plans Paving the Way for Behavioral Health

Addressing behavioral health is just as important as physical health to the Medicaid health plans, and these services and supports are needed now more than ever. In this webinar, Meridian health plan discussed their efforts on behavioral health and touched on best practices, current programs and ongoing initiatives to continue to improve behavioral health outcomes for members.

Exposure to Trauma and Building Resilience/NAMI Resources Webinar

Exposure to Trauma and Building Resilience provided the opportunity to engage in meaningful education, discussion, and activity that addresses each individual's unique life experience. The webinar overviewed how NAMI Chicago pivoted in this space since the pandemic and social unrest upheaval, while offering advice to those working in the community. Participants also learned how to support themselves and their peers with the goal of creating a space to develop intentional wellness.
Riley Cleary, Prevention Program Manager at the Illinois Association of Behavioral Health stopped by the podcast to talk about the great work the organization is doing through their Youth Mental Health First Aid and Addiction Prevention programs.

Sara Howe, Senior Director at Third Horizon Strategies, joined Samantha to talk about the mental health of youth and current trends.

Dr. Tom Allen, Executive Medical Director of Behavioral Health at BCBSIL, and Chief Psychiatrist for the BCBSIL Medicaid plan joined Samantha to talk about how Medicaid Managed Care Organizations are paving the way for Behavioral Health in Illinois.

Angela Kimball, Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy at Inseparable, joined the podcast to talk about how this initiative is working to close the gap on access to critical mental health services for all.
Policy expert Jill Hayden, Director at Sellers Dorsey, was back with Samantha to discuss what is going on in the world of behavioral health in Illinois.

Trisha Rodriguez, Director of Public Policy and Government Relations at IAMHP, returned to discuss the behavioral health legislation that IAMHP supported to improve access to behavioral health services in Illinois.

As IAMHP transitioned into our third quarter focus on behavioral health, Jen McGowan-Tomke, Chief Operating Officer at NAMI Chicago, joined Samantha to discuss the importance of addressing mental health through a social equity lens.

Allison Lowe-Fotos, Policy Manager for early learning advocate Start Early, joined Samantha to discuss the importance of infant and early childhood mental health and why more awareness around the issue is necessary.
AETNA’s Care Coordination Team Helps to Bring Hope to an Isolated Member

Thirty-three-year-old Parker Smith had lost hope.

Parker suffers from bipolar disorder and Leigh's disease, a very rare autoimmune condition. A side effect of the disease is severe headaches, which Parker complains of often. He lives at home with his mother, just the two of them. He described his relationship with his mother as them having raised each other because his mother didn’t know much about his conditions, nor did he, but they both learned together throughout the years. Along with his physical conditions, Parker suffered from symptoms of depression that stemmed from feelings of isolation and loneliness. His mother works outside of the home and was often gone for most of the day, leaving Parker alone at home, with no one to talk to and no means of transportation. He said the only person he saw consistently outside of his mother was the mail woman whom he had developed a friendly relationship with. Parker expressed to his mother many times that he needed to meet more people because the constant isolation he was experiencing made him feel hopeless about the future. Unfortunately, a habit he developed was threatening to kill or harm his mother. In the beginning, Parker’s mother would ignore his threats, however, after some time, she started to notice some of his advances becoming more serious in nature, so fearing for his safety, she called and had him hospitalized.

During his hospital stay, Parker engaged frequently with Aetna’s care coordination team, and they were able to learn more about him, his needs, and what was going on at home. At 33 years old, Parker felt like he didn’t have many friends, and he just wanted to meet new people that he could talk to. During his stay in the hospital, Parker worked closely with behavioral staff at Aetna. They helped him to see how his behavior could deter people from wanting to interact with him.
“The work that we do touches lives, but it’s really nice when you get a chance to see how transformational it is, and in this case, I really felt that way,” said Philip Montgomery, Care Coordinator at Aetna Better Health.

As a result, Parker became more aware of himself and subsequently became very active in groups, attending them regularly.

He said he found the social interaction component of his inpatient care something that he had been missing for a long time. Parker began forming friendly relationships with other patients and staff and even got to a point where he was able to lead some of the group discussions.

Since one of Parker’s main issues was that he often felt sad and alone, the behavioral health staff on the Aetna team made sure to remain consistent in outreach with him via phone calls so he knew when he could expect to hear from someone.

The care coordination team made sure to include him while discussing discharge plans and connected him with doctors and specialists in the community that could see him post-discharge to help manage his Leigh's disease, including addressing the severe headaches he was experiencing.

Aetna's Care Coordination Team:

- Ensured transportation was provided to and from his appointments.
- Connected him with a facility that would offer him a day program where he could participate and give back to the community. (He was able to attend three days a week which helped to address his feelings of isolation while his mother was away at work).
- Worked on getting him setup with home health services so that if something were to happen at home and he couldn’t get to a provider, one could come to him.

To learn more about how MCOs are improving health outcomes for their members visit: https://iamhp.net/Individuals.
OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS LESS THAN TWO MONTHS AWAY!

The Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans (IAMHP) is excited to announce our 2022 Annual Conference will be held at the beautiful Hyatt Lodge in Oak Brook, Illinois.

Our conferences attract hundreds of attendees, providers, organizations, stakeholders, policymakers, and key industry partners who are making a difference in healthcare. In 2019, we had over 400 attendees.

This year’s conference is special though, because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on the past two years and the many lessons learned. For the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), equity has always remained a priority in serving our nearly 3 million members who make up the most vulnerable populations in Illinois. However, we undoubtedly recognize the grave effects inequities have had on health outcomes throughout this public health emergency. As such, we would be remiss not to highlight the importance of bringing equity into greater focus as we continue our work to improve health outcomes in Illinois.

This year's conference will highlight the work of the MCOs to prioritize equity by addressing social determinants of health (SDOHs). We will showcase best practices, overview lessons learned, and look toward the future in hopes of continuing to transform healthcare together.

And a special thank-you to our sponsors!

To learn more, visit our conference website!
Improving access to behavioral health services and support is more important than ever as we reflect on the last several years of the COVID-19 pandemic. To assist providers with addressing behavioral health needs in their communities, the Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans (IAMHP) created this Toolkit for Providers.

IAMHP's Behavioral Health Toolkit

The full toolkit can be found here.

Be sure to follow us wherever you social!