

# Take care of your mental health



**Stephanie  
Stewart**

**T**he month of May was established as Mental Health Awareness Month in 1949 by the National Mental Health Association, now called Mental Health America. Since then, many organizations have joined together from May 1-31 every year to raise awareness about mental health and help reduce the stigma many may feel surrounding their individual situations.

Mental health and physical health work hand in hand, making both essential components to a good quality of life. According to an article by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mental health is an im-

portant part of overall health and well-being and includes emotional, psychological and social well-being.

Also worth mentioning is that the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25 percent during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a scientific brief released in March 2022 by the World Health Organization. Because of such factors as job loss, loneliness, fear, loss of a loved one and the uncertainty of the future, the impact of the pandemic was massive and affected many, both mentally and physically. Sadly, despite this increase in suffering, many people remain embarrassed to reach out for help or talk about their feelings.

**The NALC HBP wants to help change that. Here's** whom you can turn to when you need that extra support.

For High Option members, Optum®, a recognized leader in behavioral health care and substance use services, provides our mental health benefits. With Optum, you have access to more than 285,000 in-network clinicians and 3,300 in-network facilities in more than 8,800 locations nationwide.

When you choose an in-network provider for mental health and substance use disorder services, you will receive the best benefit. These in-network providers are easy to locate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, either by using our online provider locator or by calling Optum's toll free number at 877-468-1016.

We also provide Telemental Health, an added convenience for those who choose not to see an in-person provider or who prefer a virtual visit structure. To locate an in-network telemental health provider, call Optum® at 877-468-1016 or

visit [liveandworkwell.com](https://liveandworkwell.com). Some providers will allow you to schedule appointments from the website.

Even if you don't need a telemental health appointment, the [liveandworkwell.com](https://liveandworkwell.com) website is a great resource. It offers access to self-management tools, prevention programs, educational materials, videos and much more.

To get started, make sure to register and create a password. Then you can see all the benefits available through our specific health benefit plan. Click the "Find care option" located on the top ribbon. Then select "Explore care options." After you answer a few confidential questions, you will receive recommendations about your care, or you can simply select "See all benefits."

Under "See all benefits" are two programs I want to highlight—Talkspace and Self Care by AbleTo.

## Talkspace

Talkspace is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no office visit needed. This program helps you engage with a licensed, dedicated therapist, anytime, anywhere you might feel you need some extra help or support. You can send private messages (text, voice, video) or schedule live video sessions.

## Self Care by AbleTo

Through the Self Care mobile app, you have access to self-care techniques, coping tools, meditations and more. You will also receive the following:

- Daily mood tracking
- Mental health tools
- Collections of long-term life skills, techniques and resources on topics that matter most to you
- Personalized activities

Keep in mind that Self Care should not be used for urgent care needs or mental health crises. It is not intended to diagnose problems or provide treatment and should not be used on its own as a substitute for care from a provider.

For CDHP and Value Option members, Cigna Behavioral Health Network is available. Take advantage of a wide range of tools for mental health and substance use disorder conditions when you need them by calling 855-511-1893. A specialist will help identify the nature of your problem and match you with an in-network provider who has the appropriate experience to help with your specific needs.

**In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, be** kind to yourselves this May and take some time to explore the Plan's benefits. After all, we can all use a little support these days.