



CalOptima Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALOPTIMA HEALTH PARTNERS WITH NAMI OC FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM SUPPORTING HOSPITAL DISCHARGES *NAMI Orange County-trained mentors will pair with Medi-Cal members for the first time*

ORANGE, Calif. (December 7, 2022) — CalOptima Health has formed a partnership with National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Orange County to launch a peer support program for Medi-Cal members recently discharged from a psychiatric inpatient hospital stay or emergency room visit. As part of the \$5 million grant program, NAMI Orange County will pair trained peer mentors with CalOptima Health members to provide social support and assistance with navigating mental health resources.

The CalOptima Health and NAMI peer support program will work with providers and begin during the hospital stay or emergency room visit and last up to six months post-discharge, based on members' needs. Peer support mentors will help members schedule and attend follow-up care with their providers, build a social support network, and access training and other supportive services.

“Connecting our members with trained, experienced individuals who can offer invaluable guidance with navigating the mental health system is a major step toward making behavioral health services more accessible,” said Carmen Katsarov, LPCC, CCM, CalOptima Health Executive Director of Behavioral Health Integration. “Studies on the impact of mental health peer support are promising and show that it can reduce the stigma of mental illness and decrease hospitalizations and readmissions to psychiatric facilities.”

The five-year program launches January 1, 2023, with a planning phase so NAMI Orange County can tailor it to the needs of CalOptima Health members. CalOptima Health will collaborate with the Orange County Health Care Agency, local hospitals and emergency departments to support the program, which will also be a resource for members accessing CalOptima Health's Behavioral Health Call Center.

“Peer support for mental health is a critically important service,” said Steve Pitman, President of NAMI Orange County. “Our NAMI mentors will walk alongside CalOptima Health members on their journey to recovery, offering valuable support while demonstrating through their own lived experience that recovery is possible. We look forward to this partnership making a difference in the community.”

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About CalOptima Health

A county-organized health system, CalOptima Health provides publicly funded health care coverage for low-income children, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities in Orange County, California. CalOptima Health's mission is to serve member health with excellence and dignity, respecting the value and needs of each person. CalOptima Health serves more than 937,000 members with a network of nearly 10,700 primary care doctors and specialists and 45 acute and rehab hospitals.