



## Supporting the behavioral health of your millennial employees.

**THIS IS HOW™**

Millennials are experiencing a downward trend when it comes to their behavioral health—and the current COVID-19 pandemic could further exacerbate health challenges for this generation. Read on to learn more about supporting the well-being of your millennial employees.

### TODAY, ALMOST ONE-THIRD OF MILLENNIALS HAVE A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONDITION

Since our 2019 Health of America Report™ examining millennial health trends, an additional year of data shows that **rates of behavioral health conditions among millennials are rising by double digits**, with a 12 percent increase in major depression diagnoses alone. Alcohol and substance use are also on the rise—in fact, substance use disorder (SUD) had the third largest impact on millennial health just behind major depression and hypertension. Millennials diagnosed with an SUD, specifically an opioid use disorder, have much higher rates of ER visits and hospitalizations, as well as pain-related and cardiovascular conditions. What's more, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could further compromise the health of millennials with a behavioral health condition.

### AND IT'S AFFECTING THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH, TOO

Millennials with a behavioral health condition **are twice as likely to be diagnosed with a chronic physical condition** such as hypertension, type II diabetes and coronary artery disease. These kinds of chronic conditions could impact both your employees and your organization by leading to more sick days, a lower level of productivity and higher healthcare costs.

### ARE RACIAL HEALTHCARE INEQUITIES A FACTOR?

Millennials in majority Black and Hispanic communities have lower diagnosis rates of behavioral health conditions compared to millennials in majority white communities—but is the data telling us the full story? Millennials in **communities of color may have underdiagnosed behavioral health conditions** due to factors like a lack of understanding of cultural differences, the stigma often attached to diagnosis or treatment and barriers accessing behavioral healthcare.

**92%** of millennials said COVID-19 had a negative impact on their mental health

(compared to 88% of Gen Xers and 71% of Baby Boomers)<sup>1</sup>

Since the pandemic began, millennials have reported the following lifestyle behavior changes<sup>1</sup>:

**34% ARE CONSUMING MORE ALCOHOL**

**20% ARE SMOKING MORE**

**16% ARE USING DRUGS FOR NON-MEDICAL PURPOSES MORE**



**"This has been a difficult few months. Between a global pandemic, racial tensions and my mom's declining health, I've been extra anxious."**

-Millennial, Age 33<sup>1</sup>

## DOING MORE FOR MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

As awareness grows around the increased prevalence of behavioral health conditions among millennials, so does the opportunity to address these challenges. Many employers are taking a holistic approach to employee benefits to support the body and mind—and that could be exactly what millennials are looking for.

**68%** of millennials reported they are willing to actively explore tools to help them live a healthier life<sup>1</sup>

### WHERE DO YOU START?

We have identified four key aspects of whole-person care that can help organizations address their most pressing behavioral health pain points: improving access, integrating care, reducing stigma and creating a culture of health.

#### > Improve access

Help millennial employees connect with the care they need by expanding available options. COVID-19 has made virtual care the new normal, and you can build on that by enhancing virtual care benefits. At the same time, make care more affordable through lower copays and standard, no-cost screenings. Promote how easy and affordable it is to access your behavioral health resources.

#### > Integrate care

More than the generations before, millennials fully embrace the connection between mental and physical health. Talk about and model healthcare solutions around the importance of full health by finding opportunities to embed mental health into your wellness efforts. In addition, offer networks that seamlessly connect primary care and behavioral health providers to empower collaboration and create a continuum of whole-person care.

#### > Reduce stigma

Millennials are also more comfortable discussing mental health than previous generations. With that in mind, make behavioral

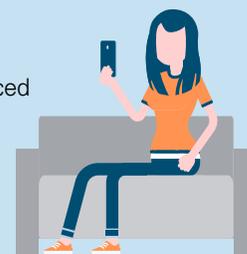
healthcare business as usual and keep the open dialogue going. Provide continuous communication about the resources available and ensure leaders at your organization share their stories and show their support. Also consider educating your workforce on the language of stigma to promote a workplace environment of acceptance and support.

#### > Create a culture of health

Think beyond traditional medical coverage to offer a range of employee benefits and perks, like expanded PTO, tuition reimbursement and fitness classes, to support a healthier, less-stressed workforce. Consider how your company's workplace environment, policies and processes can impact employees' health and well-being. Regularly ask for input from millennial employees and build an environment around what you hear so that your actions are impactful.

### COVID-19 CONVERSATIONS

Today's remote and socially distanced work environments could mean millennial employees are feeling even more isolated and stressed. Reach out, get them to weigh in about how they're doing both mentally and physically, and act on those insights.



### HEAR FIRSTHAND HOW ONE COMPANY IS TACKLING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

From creating wellness programs and personalized online portals, to addressing work/life balance and burnout, watch this video to hear how global law firm Morgan Lewis is supporting millennials' behavioral health. [Click below:](#)



**FOR ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INSIGHTS AND RESOURCES FROM OUR ONGOING MILLENNIAL HEALTH SERIES, VISIT [SMARTERBETTERHEALTHCARE.COM](https://www.smarterbetterhealthcare.com)**

You can also click here to read [The Health of America Report™](#).

All statistical data appearing herein appears in the Blue Cross Blue Shield, The Health of America Report®, Millennial Health Trends in Behavioral Health Conditions, October 2020, except where otherwise noted. <sup>1</sup>Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Generational Health Survey. October 2020.

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