



#### EVV Update

Did you know the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has a newsletter they put out regularly to help you succeed with EVV?

**Check it out!**

## Social Isolation and Loneliness

The impact of the pandemic on mental and physical health

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a dramatic shift in the day-to-day lives of our members/your patients with an increasing number of people dealing with some form of social isolation and loneliness.

Initial surveys suggest that within the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic, **loneliness increased by 20%-30% and emotional distress tripled.**

The impact of loneliness is equal to risk factors of other health concerns, including obesity and smoking. **Patients are also at a higher risk of cognitive decline, dementia, high blood pressure, heart disease, and a weakened immune system.** Mortality rates have also increased by 26% since the start of the pandemic.

COVID-19 disproportionately impacts populations already at high risk for social isolation, including older adults,

communities of color, those with low income, and those in congregate settings (e.g., nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and group homes).

Shifts in social networks, changes in physical or mental health and loss of resources are all risk factors linked to social isolation and feelings of loneliness. Being aware of these factors can help identify patients in need of resources.

As a primary care physician, you have the ability to help patients identify the cause of their physical and mental symptoms and guide them toward the help they need.

**MHS Health has free Behavioral Health Clinical Education opportunities on our [website](#).**

We encourage you to tap into that resource to help equip yourself with ways to assist your patients cope with their feelings of loneliness.



## Preferred Partnerships for COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics

When MHS Health strategized for ways to get members vaccinated for COVID-19, it became clear that something more was needed beyond setting up vaccine clinics. MHS Health collaborated with community-based organizations (CBOs) to support and promote the vaccine clinics.

MHS Health selected CBO partners that are committed to the health and well-being of the communities they serve. In Winnebago County, MHS Health worked closely with African Heritage, Inc. (AHI), a non-profit organization that focuses on support and awareness of African Americans, Blacks, and members in the Fox Cities who have an interest in African American/Black culture and issues. Two vaccine clinics were in held for MHS Health members and friends of AHI.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) is a network of 2,000 Christian churches and faith-based organizations who work toward peace with justice, the vitality of the church, and the well-being of the community. MHS Health hosted two COVID-19 vaccine clinics for members at one of the WCC churches in Green Bay. To best support the clinics, MHS Health worked with Prevea Health, a Wisconsin-based physician's group, to help administer on-site vaccinations.

MHS Health also collaborated with Milwaukee Health Services, Inc., the Beloit Community Health Center, and Vaccinate! Racine. The MHS Health/CBO partnerships have already led to discussions about future health initiatives.

## news you can use

### MEDICARE BILLING CHANGES

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) have released billing updates for various Medicare services that took effect on January 1, 2022. We want to make you aware of how these changes will impact your billing activities with us this year.

**Learn more [here](#).**

## PRO TIP

### ACE Screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences

Experiences of childhood affect life as an adult. Potentially traumatic events that occur in our childhood are called adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). They include personal experiences with violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence at home or in the community; substance abuse; mental illness; and parental instability. Having a family member attempt or die by suicide can also have a great impact on a child.

Living in a stressful environment can damage a child's sense of safety and the ability to bond. They can also negatively affect education and job/career potential and often also are connected to future chronic health problems, substance abuse, and mental illness.

Frequent mental distress is more prevalent among people of color in Wisconsin. ([Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Office of Informatics](#))

Race/Ethnicity	Experience Mental Distress
White (non Hispanic)	8%
Hispanic/Latinx	17%
Black/African American	15%

There is hope. The ACEs Aware initiative is a first-in-the nation effort to screen patients for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to help improve and save lives.

For providers, ACE screening supports the pursuit of equitable health care, and the results can be used for interventions or referrals. They can also help providers gain greater compassion, patience, and opportunities for healing.

ACE screens are recommended for adults, adolescents, and children to help develop trauma-informed care for patients. MHS Health offers ACE screening materials, or visit [ACESaware.org](#).

### MAKING IT RIGHT. INFO CORRECTION.

In the article related to appointment standards for behavioral health patients, an urgent care visit should be available within 24 hours, not 48 as was printed in the December issue. The correct expectations can always be found in our [Provider Manual](#).

**Provider Services:** 1-800-222-9831

**Behavioral Health Provider Services:** 1-800-589-3186

**Prior Authorization Requests Fax:** 1-866-467-1316

**Member Customer Service:** 1-888-713-6180

**24-hour Nurse Advice Line:** 1-800-280-2348

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