

Statement for the Record
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Introduction

Chairwoman Brownley, Representative Bergman, and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to submit this written statement for the record regarding Optum's work on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Community Care Network (CCN) program in Regions one, two and three.

On behalf of all of the women and men at UnitedHealth Group and Optum who work every day to help people live healthier lives and to help make the health system work better for everyone, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our partnership with VA, Veterans and their families, Veteran Service Organizations, community providers, our incredible program partners, and each of you to ensure that our Nation's Veterans continue to receive timely access to the best care available, whether inside VA's direct health care system or in their local communities.

We are honored to deliver quality health programs that touch virtually every point in a Military Service Member's or Veteran's life journey. Our commitment begins when one of America's sons or daughters raises their right hand to take the oath through the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command Program, to the time when they are actively serving by supporting the Defense Health Agency with our global 24/7/365 Nurse Advice Line and ensuring members of the Guard and Reserves are medically ready for deployment through the Reserve Health Readiness Program, to the provision of disability exams across the nation for Veterans and separating Service Members in partnership with the Veterans Benefits Administration Medical Disability Exam Program, and finally in support of all Veterans through the VA Telephonic Lifestyle Coaching program and the CCN.

We are proud to provide support to the six million eligible Veterans across our three regions comprising thirty-six states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. To date, our robust network of high-quality community providers contains more than two million credentialed care sites. Since the program's inception in June of 2019, Optum has received more than nine million referrals for care from VA, resulting in over thirty million medical, dental, and pharmacy service visits for which over forty-one million claims have been processed in less than ten days on average. Our robust capabilities ensure our Nation's Veterans have options when receiving high quality care in the community, when and where they need it.

Network Management & Engagement

Optum's capabilities are targeted to improve the Veteran, Provider and VA Staff experience by providing culturally competent, timely care resulting in high-quality outcomes. This starts with a robust network of high-quality, accessible community providers. We are dedicated to staying actively engaged with participating VA CCN providers by providing them with the support they need to care for Veterans and timely reimbursement for services rendered.

Optum's provider network has experienced continuous growth since the start of health care delivery in 2019. While our medical network reached a point of stabilization, we are continually working to optimize and refine the network in response to evolving VA capabilities and changes to the healthcare industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, alone our provider network has added over fifty-three thousand new providers to the network. Optum's provider engagement strategy is centered around supporting community providers in a variety of ways which allows them to select the method that works best for them. Community providers may elect to receive information through on-demand education materials available on our VA CCN Provider Portal or by connecting with one of our VA CCN Customer Service Representatives through online chat or phone. As

part of our continuous efforts to deliver responsive customer service to our providers, we continue answering providers' calls on average in less than twenty-one seconds. For more complex topics, providers also have the option to work directly with an Optum VA CCN Provider Advocate specializing in onboarding and claim resolution assistance.

Optum partners with VA at all levels (local, state and region) to ensure our community care network is actively meeting the needs of Veterans. It is important to highlight that outside of the engagements noted below between Optum and VA, a specific, individual Veteran's need may be escalated at any time through established communication channels. A VA staff member may reach out directly to Optum's VA CCN Customer Service Center or to one of Optum's dedicated Veteran Experience Officers (VEO). Individual VEOs are assigned to support specific VA Medical Centers (VAMC) and offer a direct line of communication to address any immediate concerns including provider network or claim related inquiries.

In addition, we host local monthly network adequacy meetings with individual VA facilities and VA stakeholders to evaluate network performance, anticipate changes in network demand and review contractually required deliverables. Monthly regional Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) Information Meetings (VIMs) are held to directly aid in Optum's ability to review specific metrics such as urgent care usage, transplant qualification requirements, VA CCN portal enhancements impacting Veterans, providers, or VA staff members, and claims processing, just to name a few. Optum also meets with VA Business Implementation Managers (BIMs) and VA Field Support staff during the VA CCN Quarterly Connection Meetings to review an array of topics.

Additionally, Optum partnered with VA Field Teams to coordinate network adequacy site visits as part of VA's Universal Access Deployment (UAD) visits. Site visits were held with VAMCs in Northport, New York, Wilmington, Delaware, Salisbury, North Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, Gainesville, Florida, Lexington, Kentucky, Battle Creek, Michigan, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Iowa City, Iowa, Topeka, Kansas and Leavenworth, Kansas. These visits allowed for a holistic review of capabilities across both the VA and CCN provider network to ensure adequacy and optimization for Veterans. This level of review allowed for best practices to be established that will guide future initiatives and ensure Veterans have access to care when and where they need it. In total, these collaborative meetings have included subjects such as contract performance, contract modifications, and network adequacy while providing a centralized location in which to share contract updates.

Optum also hosts periodic state specific network optimization meetings with VA and VISN leaders to improve CCN. State specific topics are reviewed including, but not limited to, foundational VA services, community provider counts, and identifying trends with CCN referrals. The intention of a state network optimization meeting is a deep dive into network availability, network accessibility and provide an opportunity to focus on any state specific need(s). All of these collaboration points between Optum and VA strengthen the ability to support VAMCs in their service to Veterans and ensure the right providers are available when and where Veterans need care, knowing their needs and the local environment change with time.

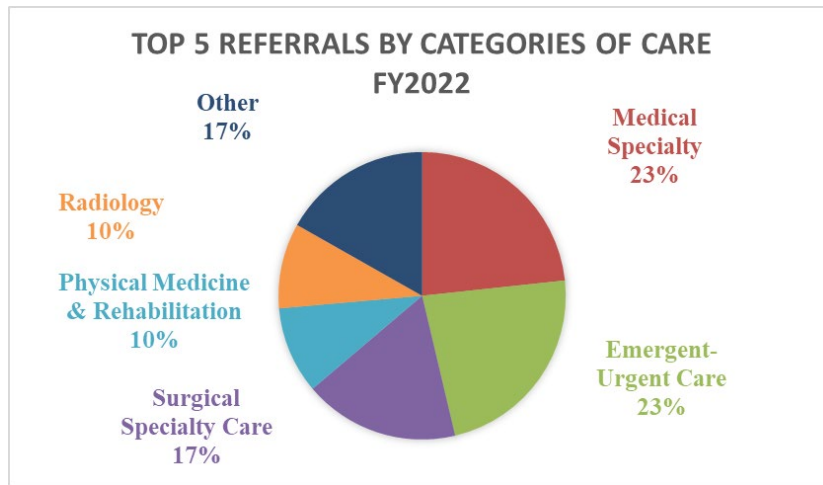
As VA and Optum continually review and seek ways to refine the provider network, a contract modification was executed on June 8, 2022. This modification revised network adequacy assessment and corresponding drive times as shown in the table below. Additionally, Veteran care preferences are captured permitting Optum and VA to better understand a Veteran's choice when selecting a community provider. Allowing Optum to validate the Veteran's needs are being met while still monitoring care delivery within revised drive times standards. As a result of this modification, we completed a comprehensive network assessment corresponding to the revised drive time standards. Efforts to recruit and onboard additional providers are ongoing. In June 2022, Optum began reporting monthly network adequacy performance data to VA, inclusive of the new drive time standards for highly rural locations. The overall combined average across all three regions and all categories of care was 94%.

**Updated Medical and Dental Adequacy Thresholds
Based on Drive Times (in minutes)**

Category of Care	Urban	Rural	Highly Rural
Primary Care	30	45	45
Specialty Care	45	100	100
Complementary & Integrated Health Services (CIHS) e.g., Tai Chi	45	100	100
General Dental	30	45	45
Specialized Dental	45	100	100
Urgent Care	30	30	30

In addition to utilization data, Optum also leverages demand mapping to further refine provider recruitment. Demand mapping is one of the tools Optum uses to measure network utilization and network effectiveness which begins by plotting the available network. Commercial best practice data is then used to assess the network against the Veteran population along with actual VA pending and active consult volumes based on location. This tool allows for a proactive view of the network by specialty and potential Veteran demand.

Another lens into Veteran utilization is the type of care Veterans are receiving in the community. The chart below reflects the 2022, proportionate distribution of Veteran care in the community by category of care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Optum and VA collaborated thereby increasing the opportunity for telehealth services. As a result, Optum has seen a considerable increase in the number telehealth provider claims. In 2022, the top five categories of telehealth are mental health, emergent/urgent care, pain management, neurology, and gastroenterology.



Optum is continually looking for ways to improve health care delivery, which for VA CCN has included recent innovations such as mobile mammography, supporting select VAMCs with appointment scheduling, and by expanding the provider network capabilities to include live organ transplant. Mobile mammography offers yet another method for women Veterans to receive routine, preventative care that may have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and supports VA in accomplishing one of their key priorities. To date, eleven mobile mammography events have been held and over three hundred appointments were scheduled for mammography screenings specifically helping women Veterans live healthier lives.

Optum also supports network utilization by assisting VAMCs with appointment scheduling. Optum has been supporting appointment scheduling efforts since February 8, 2021. VAMCs in Regions one, two or three can elect to receive appointment scheduling support and participating VAMCs determine which referrals to send to Optum. Upon receipt, Optum reaches out to the Veteran to identify their preferred provider and the Veteran's availability. As of July 9, 2022, Optum has scheduled over two hundred thousand Veteran appointments in less

than twelve days on average. By assisting VA with additional appointment scheduling capacity, Optum has been honored to help more Veterans receive timely care.

Expenditures on Community Care

After care in the community has been delivered, Optum's focus is on accurately and efficiently processing payment to VA CCN providers. To date, Optum has rendered payment in less than ten days on average, which is key to ensuring high provider satisfaction and retention. After Optum reimburses a provider, an invoice is then submitted to VA which results in a final expenditure for the program.

Optum recognizes that issues may arise and is prepared to handle them expediently to ensure the impact to participating VA CCN providers is minimized to the greatest extent possible. For example, in December 2021, an acupuncture provider connected with an Optum Provider Advocate who verified VA approved care was being erroneously denied for no referral on file. Upon further analysis, Optum's Claims Department determined the denial was a result of a recent update made to the corresponding Standardized Episode of Care (SEOC) issued by VA in October 2021. Optum and VA immediately partnered to rectify the issue within our respective databases, Optum's Claims Department ran regular queries to identify impacted claims which were immediately adjusted to ensure providers were paid timely for the care provided to Veterans. This serves as just one example of how solid communication, ongoing collaboration and swift intervention all ensure providers are reimbursed timely and accurately.

Optum and VA also regularly collaborate to ensure invoices submitted for services provided in the community are processed efficiently, while also identifying any opportunities to minimize future rejections and denials. During the first six months of 2022, 94.3% of Optum invoices submitted to VA were processed for payment in under fourteen days on average. Only 1.2% of the total Optum invoices were rejected or denied for payment. The average turnaround time for VA to make a per member per month payment (PMPM) to Optum is currently under twenty-one days, which abides by current contractual requirements.

Conclusion

Optum remains committed to delivering a dynamic, successful program that meets or exceeds our contractual obligations and is dedicated to supporting the overall health of those who have served our great Nation. We do this by investing in efforts focused on addressing health care needs that often go unrecognized in our health system. Optum's industry-leading innovations are providing Veterans with a simpler, higher quality health care experience, which is driven by continually monitoring and adjusting our network.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement for the record to provide information regarding network management, network engagement, Veteran utilization, and community care expenditures specific to VA CCN Regions one, two and three. My highly dedicated team and I look forward to our continued collaboration with VA, this Subcommittee, and all of our partners, as we collectively ensure our Nation's heroes continue to receive the health care they have earned and deserve.