

Tennessee Health Link

What is Tennessee Health Link?

Tennessee Health Link is a program that incentivizes increased care coordination for TennCare members with the highest behavioral health needs. TennCare worked closely with behavioral health providers and our health plans to create a program to address the diverse needs of members requiring behavioral health services. Each Health Link organization is a team of professionals associated with a mental health clinic or other behavioral health provider who provides whole-person, patient-centered, coordinated care for an assigned panel of members with behavioral health conditions.

The Health Link care model involves a greater emphasis on care coordination by creating an interdisciplinary care team and helping improve communication between a member's primary care and behavioral health care providers. Through better coordinated behavioral and physical health services, the program is meant to produce improved patient outcomes with the goal of giving every member in Health Link a chance to reach his or her full potential for living a rewarding and increasingly independent life in the community.

Why Health Link?

TennCare members with significant behavioral health needs face various obstacles in accessing the care they need within the structure of a traditional health care system: limited access to primary care, fragmented care due to lack of coordination across the various physical and behavioral health providers involved in their care and difficulty managing an appointment schedule due to lack of transportation or social supports.

Research shows that TennCare members with behavioral health needs are almost three times more likely than the average TennCare member to be hospitalized and twice as likely to present in an emergency room setting. These statistics point to an opportunity to better serve our members with the highest behavioral health needs by increasing the focus on care coordination.

How does Health Link work?

TennCare members who would benefit from Health Link are identified based on diagnosis, health care utilization patterns, and/or functional need. They are then assigned to a Health Link where their behavioral health providers are encouraged to ensure the best care setting for each patient, offer expanded access to care, improve treatment adherence, and reduce hospital admissions.

Health Link organizations use various care coordination and patient engagement techniques to help members manage their healthcare including:

- **Comprehensive care management** (e.g., creating care coordination and treatment plans)
- **Care coordination** (e.g., proactive outreach and follow up with primary care and behavioral health providers)
- **Health promotion** (e.g., educating the patient and his/her family on independent living skills)
- **Transitional care** (e.g., participating in the development of discharge plans)
- **Patient and family support** (e.g., supporting adherence to behavioral and physical health treatment)
- **Referral to social supports** (e.g., facilitating access to community supports including scheduling and follow through)

For more information about Tennessee Health Link, please contact us at payment.reform@tn.gov.