

Point32Health

The Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health

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Mental Health risks related to climate change events

The risks associated with global warming are multifaceted and interconnected, affecting various aspects of our environment, society, and economy.

Climate change has significant psychological effects that can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and lead to new ones.

Effect of extreme weather

- Following disasters, mental health problems increase, both among people with no history of mental illness, and those at risk.
- These reactions may be short-lived or long-lasting.

Effect of temperature change

- Some patients with mental illness can be susceptible to heat.
- Some medications used by patients with schizophrenia may affect temperature regulation or induce hyperthermia.

Most common mental health conditions observed after natural disaster

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive memories, nightmares, flashbacks; avoidance of reminders of the trauma; negative changes in thoughts and mood; and alterations in arousal and reactivity (e.g., hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping).

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)

- Similar to PTSD but occurs within one month of the traumatic event. Symptoms include intrusive memories, negative mood, dissociative symptoms (e.g., feeling detached from oneself), avoidance, and arousal symptoms.

Depression

- Persistent sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and thoughts of death or suicide.

Anxiety Disorders

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Excessive worry and anxiety about various things, often accompanied by physical symptoms like restlessness, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating.
- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** Intense fear of social situations due to worries about being judged or scrutinized.

Substance Use Disorders

- **Increased Risk:** Natural disasters can lead to increased substance use (alcohol, drugs) as people try to cope with the trauma and stress.

Factors that Increase Risk:

- Lack of basic needs (food, shelter, etc.)
- Severity of the disaster
- Direct & secondary exposure to trauma
- Loss of loved ones, home, or community
- Displacement and relocation
- Pre-existing mental health conditions
- Lack of social support
- Economic hardship
- Limited access to mental health care

[Source: Psychological Medicine](#)

Mental Health Impacts following Hurricane Katrina: Long-term impact case example

Prevalence of probable serious mental illness (SMI) **doubled** in study of 392 low-income parents impacted by Hurricane Katrina

Estimates range from **one-third to nearly half** of those surveyed showing probable PTSD

[Source: American Journal of Orthopsychiatry](#)

In one study, **54%** of displaced and returning children were experiencing symptoms that put them in need of further mental health care

Symptoms were most common in children who had experienced previous loss or trauma

[Source: American Psychological Association](#)

Long-term Effects: Twelve years later, **one in six** survivors continue to show symptoms indicative of PTSD.

[Source: Social Science & Medicine](#)

Impact on Different Groups

COMMUNITIES OF COLOR
Some communities of color living in risk-prone areas face cumulative exposure to multiple pollutants.
Adaptation plans that consider these communities and improve access to healthcare help address social inequities.

OLDER ADULTS
Older adults are vulnerable to extreme events that cause power outages or require evacuation.
Checking on elderly neighbors and proper emergency communication can save lives.

CHILDREN
Children have higher risk of heat stroke and illness than adults.
Adults can lessen risk by monitoring exertion and hydration.

LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES
Low income families are at risk of physical and mental illnesses during flooding and in crowded shelter conditions.
Comprehensive disaster management can improve resiliency for people with limited resources.

Source: [The Fourth National Climate Assessment](#)

Growing “Eco-Anxiety”

Eco-anxiety, also known as climate anxiety, is a growing phenomenon characterized by intense worry, fear, and distress about the current and future state of the environment and the impacts of climate change

- A 2021 global survey of 10,000 young people (aged 16-25) found that 60% were very worried about climate change, and nearly half said it negatively affected their daily lives.
 - *Source: Lancet Planetary Health*
- A 2022 survey in the US found that 10% of respondents reported feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge about global warming at least several days per week.
 - *Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*

Worry & Fear

- Persistent concerns about environmental problems, climate change impacts, and the future.

Sadness & Grief / Solastalgia

- Feeling a sense of loss for the natural world and grief over loss of changing home landscapes.

Anger & Frustration

- Feeling anger towards those perceived as responsible for environmental damage or inaction on climate change.

Guilt & Shame

- Feeling guilty about one's own environmental impact or helpless to make a difference.

Helplessness & Hopelessness:

- Feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and a sense of powerlessness to effect change.

Physical Symptoms:

- Experiencing physical manifestations of anxiety, such as difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, or increased heart rate.

Current Mental Health Crisis in the US

Overall Prevalence

- In 2021-2022, 23% of adults experienced a mental illness, which equates to almost 60 million Americans
- Source: NIMH

Increased Demand & Low Provider Supply

- One report noted a 38% increase in people seeking mental health care since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Source: JAMA Health Forum
- The US faces shortages of mental health professionals, particularly in rural and underserved communities.
- Source: AAMC

Drivers of increased demand

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Social Unrest and Trauma
- Economic Hardship
- Reduced stigma and greater awareness of mental health issues

Ninety percent of the public think there is a mental health crisis in the United States today



One-third of all adults report that they have felt anxious either always or often in the past year



One-third of respondents could not get the mental health services they needed



2022 survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and CNN

Spectrum of Behavioral Health Care

Low *Rising* *High*



 Digital Solutions

 Coaching & Peer Support

 Outpatient Treatment

 Community Based Services / CBHCs

 Intensive Outpatient / Partial Hospitals

 Inpatient Support

System of Care Opportunities to Increase Access

Encourage more behavioral health providers to the field

Increase community-based programming

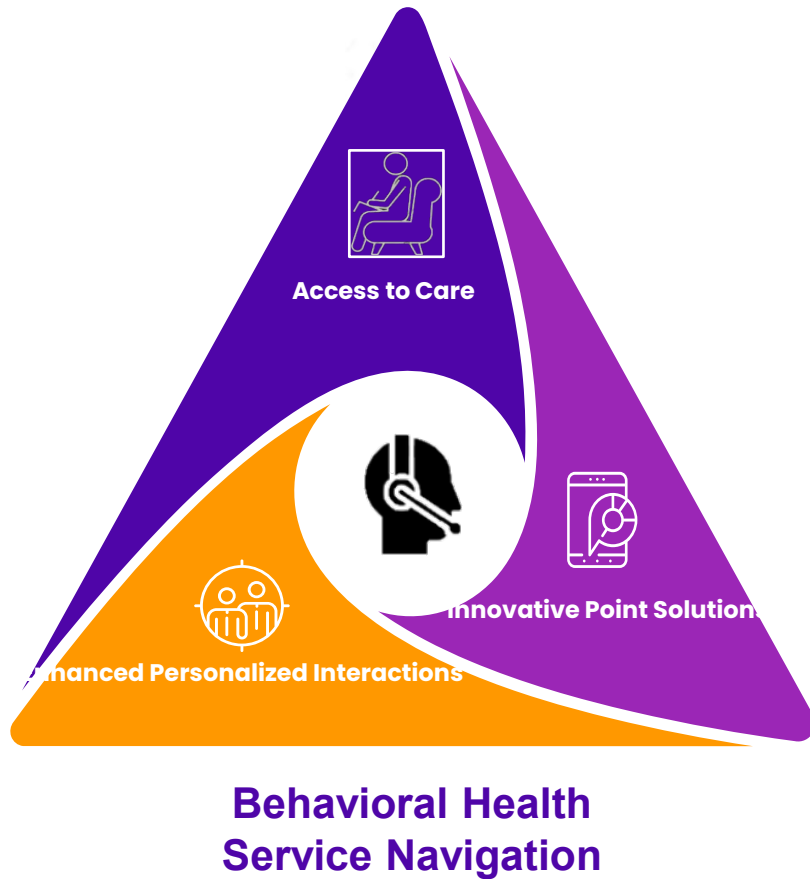
Promote whole person care model

Outreach programming for populations at risk

Continue to explore digital service solutions & expand peer support

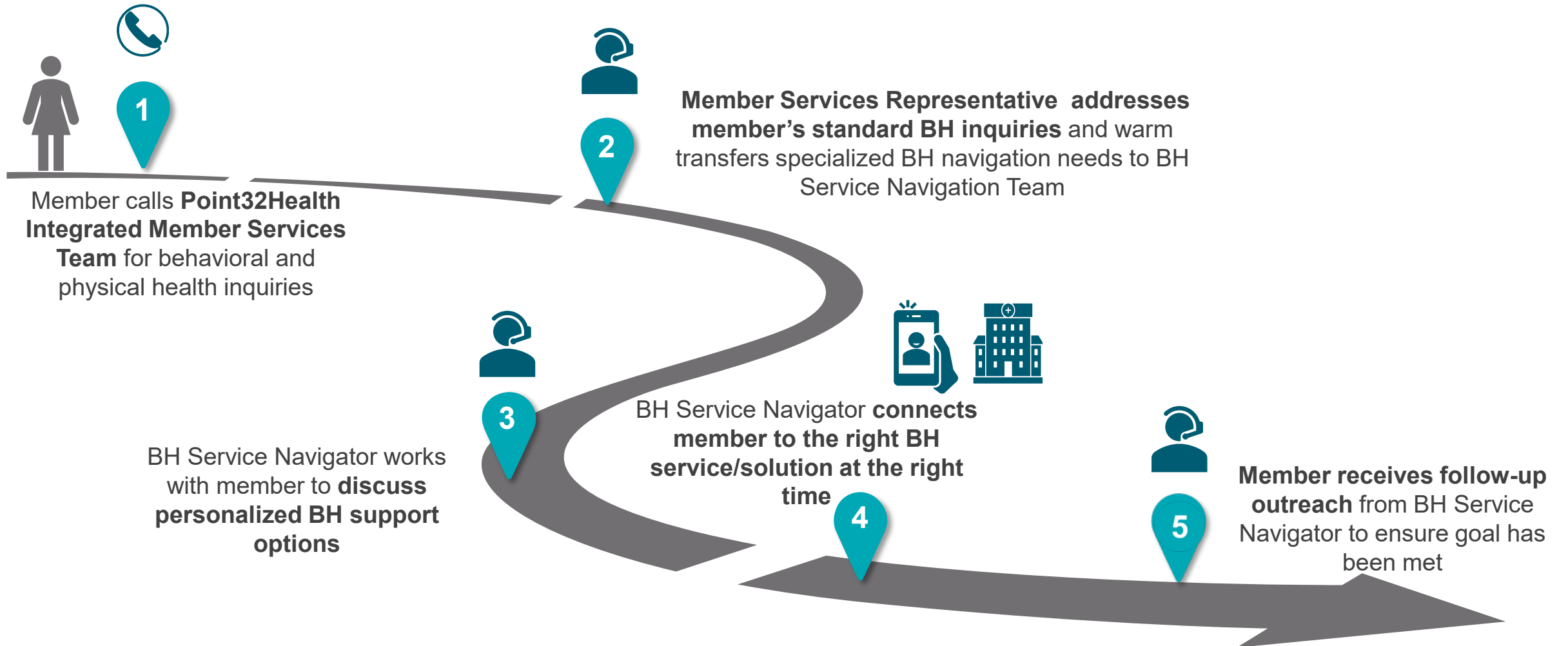
Add service & system navigation support

Point32Health's Behavioral Health Service Navigation Program



- **Strengthen the Member Experience:** by helping members navigate the complex healthcare system and care continuum through enhanced personalized interactions
- **Enhance Access to Care:** by helping members obtain timely BH OP appointments
- **Connect with Digital & Point Solutions:** by educating members about and connecting them with our innovative tools and services to support their behavioral health needs
- **Support Advancement of Health Equity:** by providing BH Service Navigation to all lines of business

BH Service Navigation: Member Journey Example



Resources



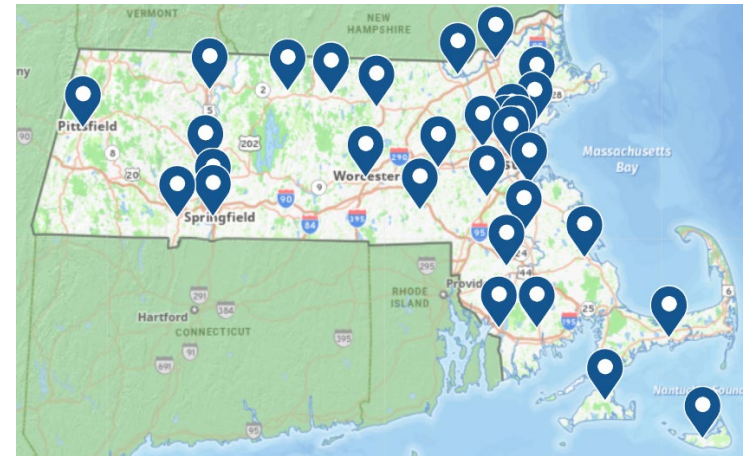
24/7 SUPPORT

MASSACHUSETTS
**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH
HELP LINE**



VISIT [MASSHHELPLINE.COM](https://www.masshelpline.com) TO CHAT

Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) are **one-stop shops** for a wide range of mental health and substance use services and treatment



[mass.gov/find-a-cbhc](https://www.mass.gov/find-a-cbhc)

Be a Behavioral Health Champion



Mental Health
FIRST AID

**Learn about
Mental Health
First Aid**

**Fight Mental
Health Stigma**

**Validate
emotional
experiences of
others**

**Get involved &
advocate for
mental health
care**

