

### **What is ACE?**

ACE is a quality-focused measurement program that recognizes and rewards excellent service from our network groups and clinicians, and creates more transparency for care advocates and Members. Using nationally-based, regionally-adjusted metrics, Optum will identify clinicians and groups who deliver outstanding care. The results of this data-driven program will allow us to annually identify our best performing clinicians and reward them.

### **What does the ACE program hope to achieve?**

ACE recognizes and rewards clinicians who consistently demonstrate high-performing care. This facilitates an environment of better transparency and choice for Optum Members and a more loyal patient population for our network providers. It is our strong belief that Member outcomes are the most important indicator of quality health care service.

### **What are the perks of the ACE program?**

Eligible network clinicians and groups who achieve Platinum status will be rewarded in a number of ways. To begin with, Platinum clinicians and groups will be entitled to a twelve-month, fee increase. During that twelve month period, Wellness Assessment and claims data will continue to be evaluated. If clinicians and groups meet the Platinum benchmarks after the twelve-month period, the fee increase will remain in effect. If, however, benchmark scores fall below Platinum criteria, fees will return to their previously contracted rates.

It's important for individual clinicians and groups to continue submitting ALERT Wellness Assessments, even if the practice resides in a state that is not participating in the ACE program (please see below). Data will continue to be evaluated and once we are able to move forward in those states, we will be able to recognize and reward those clinicians and groups in a timelier manner because we will already have the data on hand.

### **How much of a fee increase does Platinum status entail?**

Optum intends to reward our best clinicians and groups by instituting a 3% fee schedule increase. The fee increase will remain in effect for twelve months, during which time Wellness Assessments and claims data will continue to be evaluated. If clinicians and groups meet the Platinum benchmarks after the twelve-month period, the fee increase will remain in effect. If, however, benchmark scores fall below Platinum criteria, fees will return to their previously contracted rates.

### **Achieving Platinum means I also qualify for FREE unlimited CEUs?**

As a result of your excellent performance, you or your group will also have access to FREE, unlimited CEU credits through Relias Learning. Relias Learning offers online continuing education for behavioral health, mental health, addiction treatment, community health, developmental disabilities, community action and child welfare organizations. Access to Relias Learning is yours for free when you achieve Platinum status. If you have achieved Platinum and are interested in taking advantage of free unlimited CEU credits, please contact [ace@optum.com](mailto:ace@optum.com) for more information.

### **Will every clinician in the Optum network be measured?**

Currently, clinicians and groups in **CA, CO, MD, NY, MO** and **TX** will not be publicly recognized as part of the ACE program. It is still important for clinicians in these six states to continue submitting their ALERT Wellness Assessments as this data will inform our performance-based contracting. Once we are able to move forward in those states with the ACE program, we will be able to recognize and reward those clinicians and groups in a timelier manner because we will already have the data on hand.

### **If I'm in an excluded state, should I continue to submit Wellness Assessments?**

Yes, absolutely! It's very important that you continue submitting ALERT Wellness Assessments. Even though your practice may reside in one of the excluded states, your data will still be evaluated and may still qualify you or your group for performance-based contracting increases. And once we receive national recognition and NCQA accreditation for our ACE metrics, we will have your data on hand in order to accurately evaluate you within the ACE program.

### **What are the minimum requirements for inclusion in the ACE program?**

Network clinicians and groups must have a minimum of ten cases for the measurement period (two years) in which the initial Wellness Assessment for each of those ten cases measured in the clinical range for global distress, and then at least one follow up Wellness Assessment attributable to each of those cases.

### Why is this being instituted now?

In 2009, Optum established the *Campaign for Excellence* (CFE) to measure clinical quality outcomes. In response to requests from clinicians and Members for increased transparency, value and choice within behavioral health services, Optum discontinued CFE in 2014 and transitioned to *Achievements in Clinical Excellence – Clinicians*. The ACE program is broader in scope than CFE because it measures both effectiveness *and* efficiency. Data from these two metrics provides a more accurate indicator of provider performance.

### Do clinicians have a say in the way measurements are determined and scored?

The ACE data will be compiled annually based on the previous two years, and provider scores will be made available for viewing on or about November 1 of each year. Clinicians will then have a 60-day period to review their data prior to any recognition being made public on [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com). To ensure a timely review of data, please submit your [ACE Review Request Form](#) within 30 days of notification.

### How do I request a review of my score?

Clinicians may request a review of their data and scores by submitting an [ACE Review Request Form](#) within 60 days prior to the rankings being made public on [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com). In order to ensure a timely review, please submit your review request within 30 days of notification.

### How exactly are the effectiveness and efficiency metrics calculated?

#### Effectiveness

The effectiveness measure is compiled from the clinician Severity Adjusted Effect Size (SAES) metric from submitted ALERT Wellness Assessments.

Severity Adjusted Effect Size (SAES) is a standardized measure of change commonly used in the social sciences to describe the effectiveness of treatments. SAES was chosen to measure clinical outcomes for the ACE program because it meets the requirements for:

- Transparency
- incorporates input from external statisticians and subject matter experts
- Integrates key benchmarks

Additionally, SAES takes the concept of effect size one step further by incorporating statistical adjustments to account for Member characteristics (e.g., clinical severity). In the same way that SAES can be used to measure the effectiveness of a single treatment episode for one clinician, it can also be used to derive a measure of effectiveness for group practices.

#### Efficiency

The efficiency metric is the difference between the predicted Average Number of Visits (ANOV) and the expected ANOV. This difference is what we refer to as the **residual Average Number of Visits** (rANOV) per treatment episode. Calculation of the rANOV uses a hierarchical linear model. Below summarizes how Optum calculates the rANOV:

#### Predicted Average Number of Visits

Calculation of the Average Number of Visits (ANOV) accounts for multiple treatment episodes for each clinician and patient case mix. The ANOV represents the average number of visits per episode that is “predicted” based on *your or your group’s* performance from the observed case mix. The model adjusts for case-mix variables that include Member demographics, severity and acuity, and other treatment characteristics.

#### Expected Average Number of Visits

The expected ANOV represents the average number of visits “expected” for an *average* clinician with a similar Member case mix. The model adjusts for case-mix variables that include Member demographics, severity and acuity, and other treatment characteristics.

#### Residual Average Number of Visits

Your residual ANOV represents the difference between the predicted ANOV and the expected ANOV. A negative residual means that the predicted ANOV was LOWER than the expected ANOV given the clinician’s case mix. A positive residual means that the predicted ANOV was HIGHER than the expected ANOV given the case mix. The residual for an individual clinician or group is then compared to other clinicians or groups within the region to determine level of performance.

A “treatment episode” is comprised of consecutive outpatient visits and/or medication services incurred by a Member with the same clinician over a 12-month period. An episode begins with the first date of service (“index” date) incurred after a minimum of 120\* days in which the Member was not treated by the clinician. An episode ends 12 months after the index date unless there is a gap in treatment of 120 days or more. If a gap in treatment of 120 days or more occurs within the 12-month period, the episode ends at the last date of service before the gap.

\*The 120-day gap in treatment that indicates the beginning or end of a treatment episode applies to Psychologists (LP, PhD) and Master’s-Level Clinicians (e.g., MFT, LCSW). The gap expands to 180 days for Psychiatrists (MD) and Nurse Practitioners (e.g., NP, MHNP), who may see patients less frequently for medication management.

### How ACE evaluation affects me as a clinician?

While every clinician listed on the [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com) website has met rigorous credentialing standards required by Optum, the ACE program relies on metrics compiled from data submitted through ALERT Wellness Assessments for effectiveness and from claims for efficiency. These scores are then used to evaluate network clinicians and groups. Clinicians and groups who meet or exceed ACE regional benchmark metrics will be recognized as a Platinum and receive a Platinum ribbon on the [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com) website.

Ribbon recognition on [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com) is important because this achievement makes clinicians and groups highly visible when referral sources and Members search for service providers on the [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com) website.

The ribbon designation is intended only as a guide when choosing a clinician or clinician group and should not be the sole factor in a Member’s selection of a treatment professional. For more on Optum’s clinician evaluation program, please review the ACE Clinician program description.

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### Where can I see and keep track of my ACE scores?

Practitioners will be able to view their scores by logging into [providerexpress.com](http://providerexpress.com) with an Optum ID, clicking on the Providers Report tab and then clicking on Achievements in Clinical Excellence on their dashboard. ACE metrics will be made available for viewing on or about November 1 of each year. Clinicians and groups will then have a 60-day period to review data prior to it being made public. Network clinicians and groups may also request a review of their data by submitting an ACE Review Request Form. In order to ensure a timely review, please submit your review request within 30 days of being notified of your ACE score.

### Do Optum Members or other clinicians have access to my scores?

After the 60-day review period, Members logged into the [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com) website will be able to view clinicians’ recognition, but will not have access to the raw data that constitutes the scores or the scores themselves.

### Can I appeal my ACE score?

Clinicians have a 60-day period from the time ACE scores are made available in your Provider Express dashboard---generally around November 1 of each year---to review their scores and request a review of their data. This is done by submitting an [ACE Review Request Form](#).

### Can I opt out of the ACE program?

Yes. To opt out of the ACE program, please send an email to [ace@optum.com](mailto:ace@optum.com) specifically requesting to be removed from the ACE program. Please note that by opting out of ACE, you will not receive any recognition on [liveandworkwell.com](http://liveandworkwell.com). Additionally, opting out of ACE will also make you ineligible for ACE perks, such as free CEUs and the twelve-month fee increase.