

Organizational Background: Commonwealth Care Alliance is a not-for-profit Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan providing service through the Senior Care Options (SCO) program to approximately 5,400 Medicaid only and dual eligible elders 65 and over. The Commonwealth Care Alliance Senior Care Options (SCO) program covers all Medicare and Medicaid services and was designed to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to enable elderly and disabled individuals to make their own decisions, take steps to manage their own health, and receive the care they choose in order to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. CCA strives for coordinated, cost effective and high quality patient-centered care. We serve a population with complex medical and behavioral health needs, most of whom are dually eligible and a smaller portion solely covered by Medicaid.

Project Description: After internal research and program review, CCA SCO determined that addressing the widespread problem of depression among its members could produce medical and mental health benefits. The number of CCA SCO members with previously unidentified and or untreated BH problems was much higher than expected. In 2010, 27% of SCO members had a diagnosis of depression. Antidepressants were prescribed for 85% of SCO member with depression while 33% had psychotherapy.

Depression is a treatable disorder in older adults. However, CCA-SCO's internal review suggested an emphasis on anti-depressant medication and an underuse of non-pharmaceutical treatments. Because behavioral interventions have been shown to be as effective as anti-depressant medication in the treatment of certain types of depression in the elderly, CCA-SCO decided to expand behavioral and psycho-social approaches to alleviate depression.

CCA's Department of Health Education & Caregiver Training (HECT) is developing a layperson led educational and engagement program for depression care management— using lessons learned from the Stanford Chronic Disease and Diabetes Self-Management program, along with holistic approaches such as “Art and Healing,” creative exercises, meditation, relaxation, movement and social interaction and other tested and innovative ideas. CCA HECT has a strong track record in developing innovative group programs for consumer education and encouragement of healthy life-styles. Beginning in 2006, Commonwealth Care Alliance offered workshops to its members, their family caregivers and PCAs using the Stanford model of chronic disease management and more recently diabetes self-management. These workshops support our belief that engaging consumers in their own care will improve the health of our members. Stanford reports that “subjects that took the program, when compared to those who did not, demonstrated significant improvements and efficacy.” Furthermore, these programs have been proven successful in helping participants overcome depression as indicated in the revised Stanford CDSMP-2012 manual.

The primary goal is to enable participants to build self-confidence to assume an active role in maintaining and managing their feelings of sadness, despondency, disappointment or hopelessness. This will be achieved by giving members the opportunity to share, learn, try new experiences, and enjoy each other in a friendly and fun, non-judgmental, and non-prescriptive environment where they feel loved, respected and valued.