

Scaling Peer Support to Address Loneliness

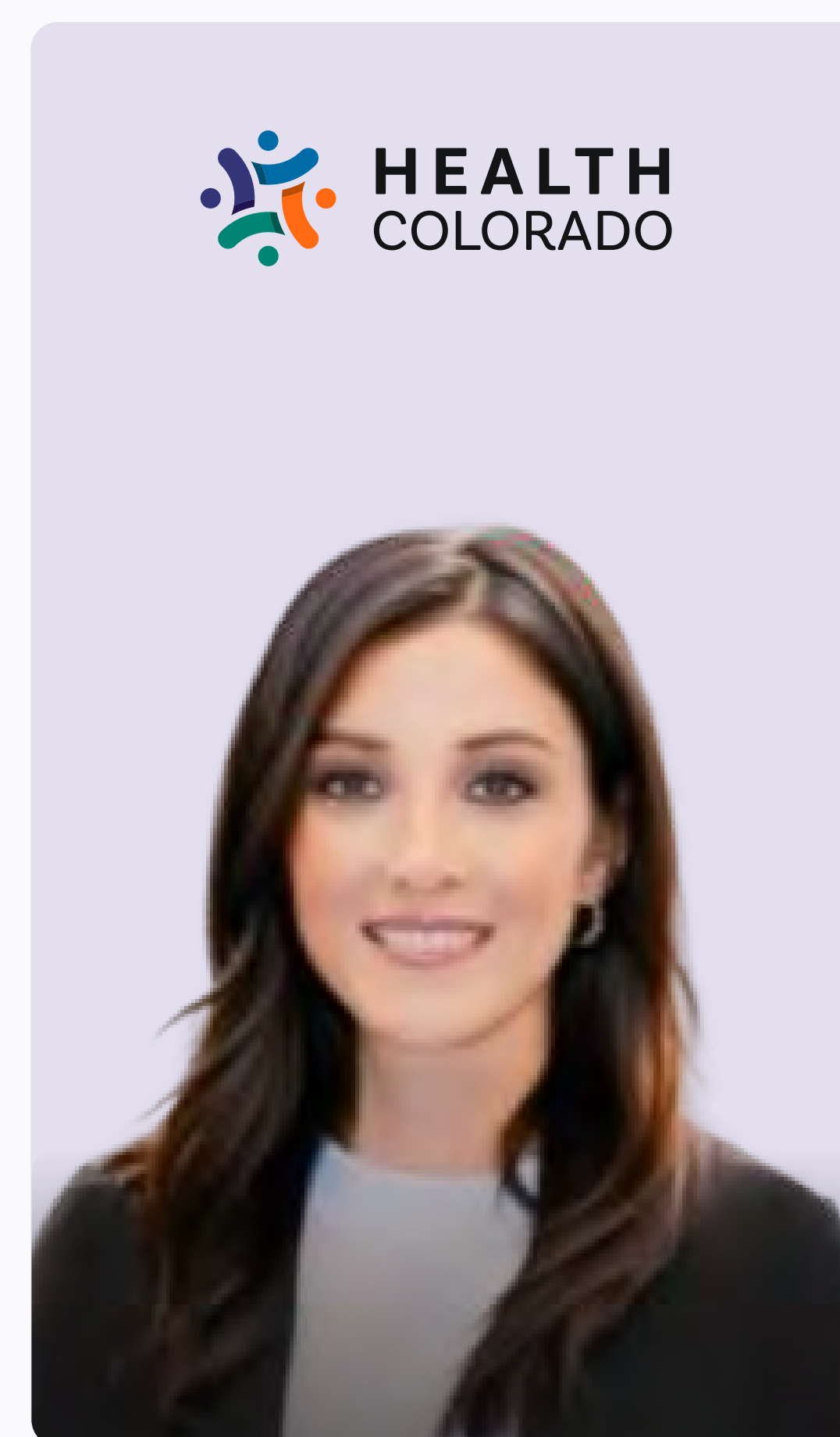
Lessons from Medicaid & DSNP Health Plans

On May 1, 2025, Wisdo Health conducted a webinar with leaders in health plans to discuss their experience in scaling online peer support to combat loneliness and mental health among their Medicaid and DSNP population.



Patrick Gordon
CEO

Amber Beye
Program Manager,
SDOH



Chesley Sterling
Dir. Children,
Youth & Family Systems



Matthew Wilkins
Manager,
BH Coordination

The Epidemic of Loneliness: A Healthcare Challenge

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a landmark advisory identifying loneliness and social isolation as a public health epidemic. The scale of the problem is staggering: 50% of U.S. adults report feeling lonely, a trend that predates COVID-19 and has continued to worsen. Between 2000 and 2023, time spent with friends dropped by 59% (equivalent to 40 fewer hours per month), and the average number of close friends per person declined from three to fewer than two.

This epidemic carries serious consequences for physical and mental health. Lonely individuals are 60% more likely to visit the ER, 50% more likely to be hospitalized, and face sharply higher risks for heart disease, stroke, and dementia. For health plans, the impact is equally alarming: socially isolated older adults cost an additional \$1,600 per year in care. Vulnerable populations, including Medicaid members, Gen Z, BIPOC communities, caregivers, and those in rural regions, bear the greatest burden.

Peer Support: A Scalable, Evidence-Based Solution

Peer support offers a powerful way to combat loneliness through emotional connection and shared lived experience. Research shows peer support can reduce reported loneliness by up to 40% in just 6 to 8 weeks and drive a 25-30% drop in depression and anxiety symptoms. Users are also twice as likely to follow through with behavioral health referrals and complete therapy.

Wisdo Health exemplifies this model by providing an evidence-based digital platform that offers 24/7 precision-matched peer support, moderated communities, guided coaching, monthly check-ins, and seamless referrals to therapy and social determinants of health (SDOH) resources. Its efficacy has been clinically validated, and its impact is felt by users nationwide and health plans including those highlighted in this summary.

Insights from the Field: Health Plan Leaders Speak

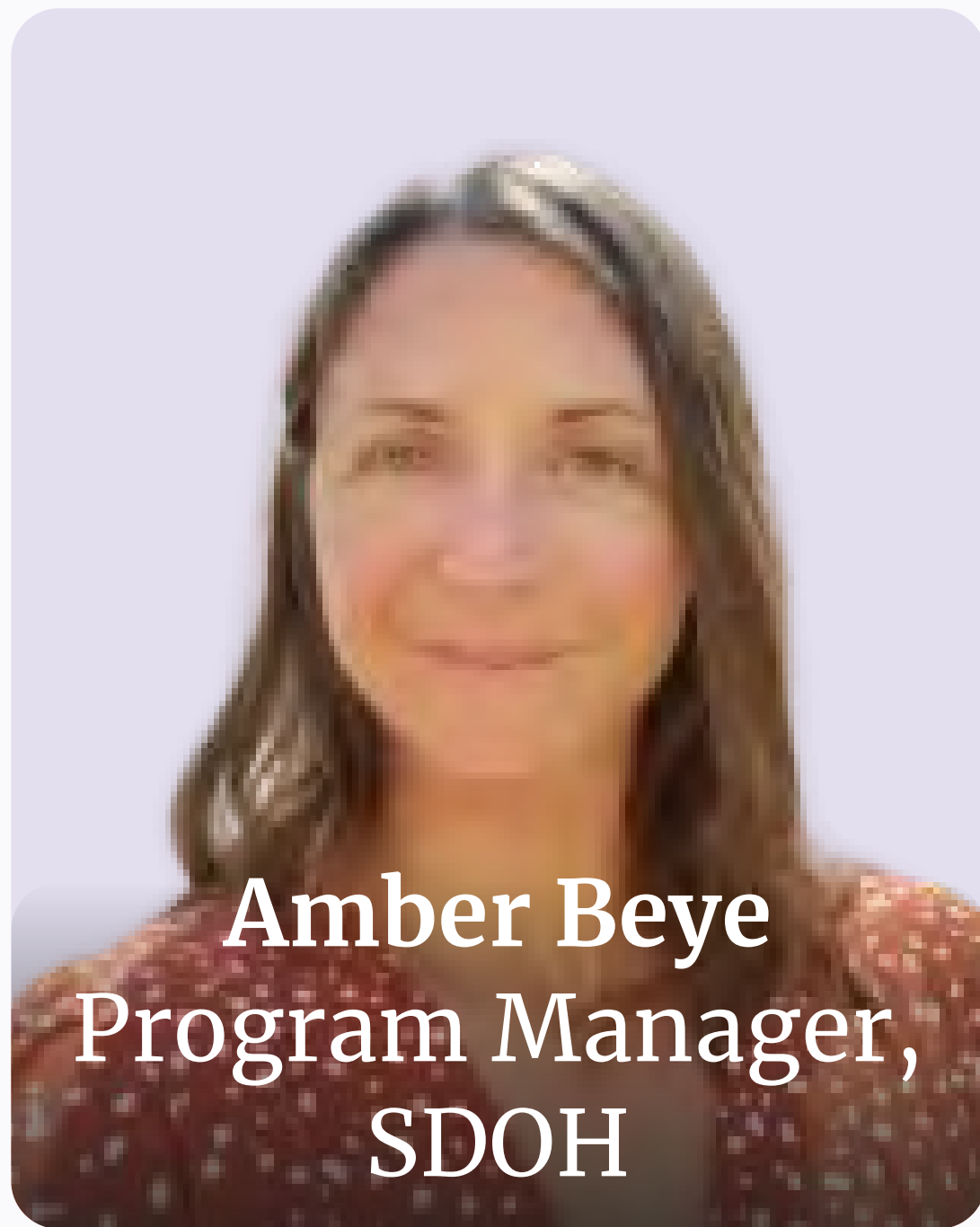


Patrick Gordon, CEO of Rocky Mountain Health Plans, a UnitedHealthcare Health Plan emphasized the unique needs of rural communities: "Isolation is the nature of life in many rural areas. If we're going to address food insecurity and transportation, we must also address loneliness." During the Q&A he added "The evidence is profound—it will kill you."

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He noted that digital peer support is especially effective in these areas where geographic barriers and limited access to community services make traditional interventions difficult. Patrick also stressed the importance of nurturing relationships with small providers in rural areas to ensure sustainability and scalability of screening and referral workflows.

Finally, Patrick also called out specific risk among BIPOC and rural populations, noting how addressing loneliness supports other SDOH domains and aligns well with LTSS and HCBS services.



Amber Beye, who oversees population health programs at Rocky Mountain Health Plan, noted: “Care teams love new tools. Wisdo’s 24/7 availability extends their capacity when they can’t be there.” She emphasized that this enables teams to support members in between interactions, especially given workload constraints. Amber discussed the platform’s inclusion in RMHP’s care coordination toolkits, provider education, and training and that Wisdo helps surface unmet social needs and is a resource not just for socialization, but for broader SDoH insight and intervention.

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RMHP’s members who joined Wisdo reported:

- Statistically significant **reductions of 29% in loneliness and 42% in depression**
- 91% member satisfaction rate
- Reported 1,805 ICD-10 Z-code related to social and mental health needs



Chesley Sterling of Health Colorado discussed the platform’s integration into the plan’s crisis services: “Peer support isn’t supplemental. It’s foundational to recovery.” Wisdo bridges the gap between immediate crisis intervention and long-term connection. Chesley emphasized the platform’s role following mobile crisis responses and crisis resolution team support, helping individuals transition from acute crisis to ongoing recovery.

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She highlighted the issue of trust as central to success, noting, “Every health plan is looking to build trust with their members.” Chesley also shared that many families are hesitant to reach out for help if it involves public visibility, but they will use an app like Wisdo where stigma is minimized. While Wisdo doesn’t directly serve children, it plays a vital role supporting their caregivers, which is essential for family well-being.

Data Sources:

U.S. Surgeon General Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community. May 2023 [Link]

Loneliness and Social Isolation—AARP Public Policy Institute [Link]

Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index Report (2020 Update) [Link]

Peer Support: Evidence and Impact. SAMHSA. [Link]



caredon
Global Solutions

Matthew Wilkins from Caredon emphasized workflow design and training:

“We embedded Wisdo into our intake assessments and documentation systems so it's top-of-mind for care coordinators.” He highlighted how care coordinators were trained to present and encourage members to join Wisdo, further supported by printed materials in clinics and community offices. Matthew reinforced that availability matters, stating that while other peer solutions exist, “very few are available 24/7, and that’s what people need.”

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Matthew shared that members consistently reported that Wisdo felt safe, non-judgmental, and accessible. They valued being matched with peers based on shared experience, not popularity, and appreciated that the platform was safe and allowed them to be anonymous. One member shared: “I feel 80% better than when I started. It’s the best I’ve felt in a long time.”

About Wisdo Health

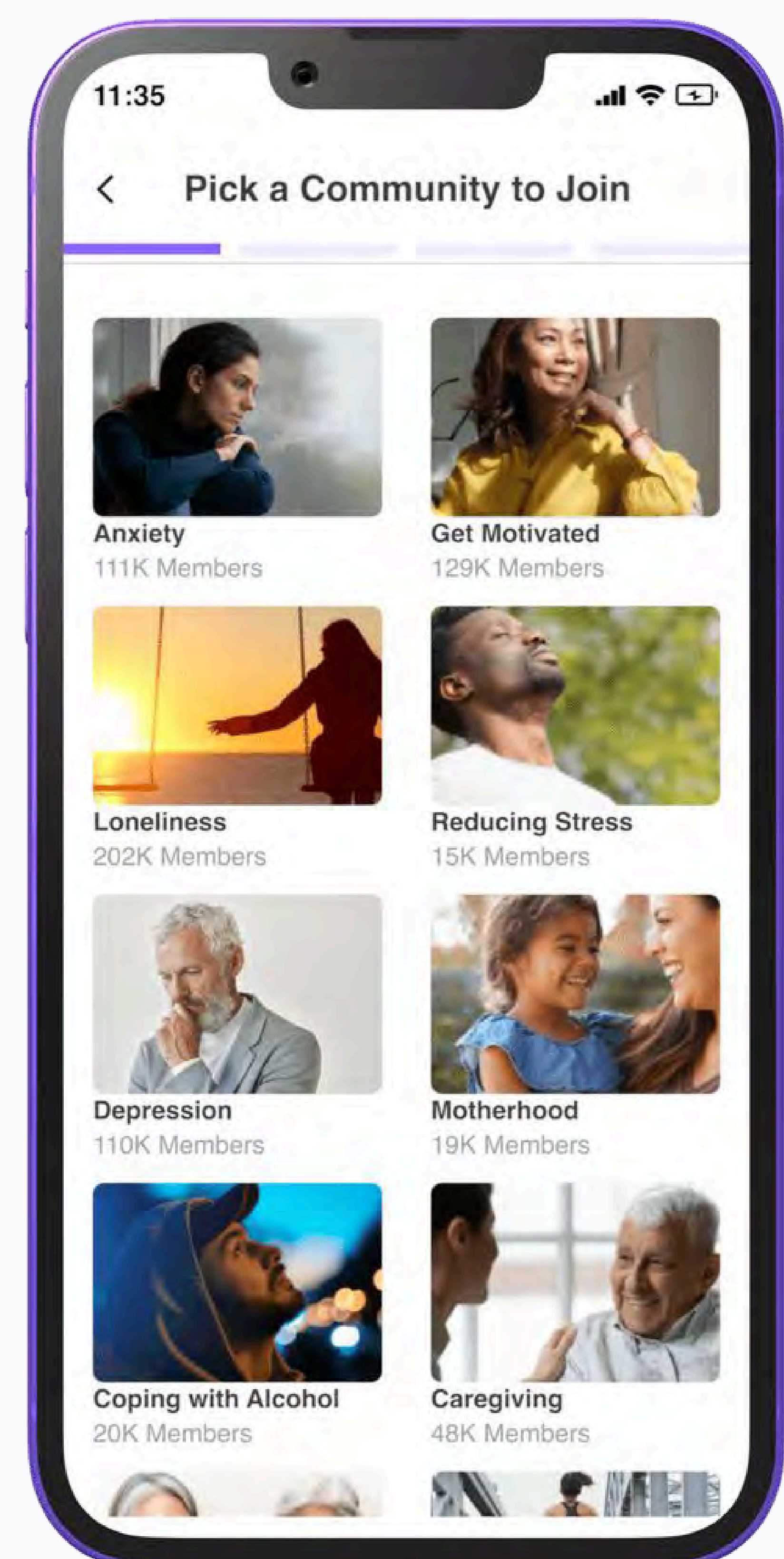
Wisdo Health is a clinically proven, AI-powered peer support and social health platform designed to help health plans and teletherapy providers address loneliness, social isolation, and related behavioral health challenges. Wisdo delivers 24/7 support from trained peers with shared lived experience, precision-matched communities, group coaching, monthly check-ins, and seamless referrals to therapy and SDoH resources. We’re proud to partner with Commercial, Medicaid, Medicare Advantage, DSNP, and behavioral/telehealth leaders to improve outcomes, reduce costs, and build resilient, connected populations.

Contact Us

Interested in learning more or partnering with us?

Reach out to: info@wisdo.com

Visit us: www.wisdo.com



Let’s work together to cure loneliness at scale.