



2024 CASE STUDY

# The Cost Behind Reporting

Meeting the mental health needs of journalists

## About Hearst

### SPRING HEALTH LAUNCH DATE

February 2021

### COMPANY SIZE

~22,000 globally

### ELIGIBLE FOR THE SPRING HEALTH BENEFIT

~11,000 Hearst colleagues, ~19,000 dependents

### CLINICAL RESULTS FOR ENROLLED COLLEAGUES

February 1, 2023 to present

### INDUSTRY

Diversified information, services & media

## About Hearst Newspapers

Hearst Newspapers informs, educates, and entertains 45 million digital visitors monthly and over 6 million print readers weekly through a collective network of 50+ leading websites, 24 daily and 52 weekly publications, innovative digital products and businesses such as King Features, Hearst DevHub, and more.



*Of Hearst colleagues enrolled in Spring Health:*

87%	improved depression symptoms
83%	improved anxiety symptoms
62%	have improved to mild or no depression symptoms
58%	have improved to mild or no anxiety symptoms
100%	of enrolled colleagues who screened positive for suicidal ideation and intent were supported
30%	enrollment rate of Hearst colleagues
84%	of enrolled colleagues completed their mental wellness assessment



In recent years, mental health support has become an expected workplace benefit. But certain industries—like journalism—and companies—like Hearst—require a more customized solution that goes beyond a traditional employee assistance program (EAP).

Reporters on the frontlines become first responders, covering distressing events of all kinds, from war to epidemics to violence.

According to the DART Center for Journalism & Trauma, research suggests between 80 and 100% of all journalists nationally have been **exposed to work-related traumatic events**, and according to Nieman Lab, over 60% report **experiencing high levels of anxiety**.

The expectation to be constantly “on” and break stories in a 24/7 news cycle can also lead to **burnout**, **exhaustion**, and **limited work-life balance**. All these factors can affect the mental health of journalists on the frontlines of news coverage.

Hearst Newspapers—with approximately 2,400 colleagues nationwide—recognized early the need for specialized mental health services and partnered with **Spring Health** to launch a variety of benefits, including **expedited appointments with therapists**, **virtual behavioral health options**, a **diverse provider network**, and **manager and HR training**.

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We had journalists on the frontlines during the pandemic, and no one knew very much about the effects of reporting from hospitals and high-stress areas. *That’s when we recognized that the traditional EAP programs we had for our colleagues may not be as specialized as needed.*

**Maria Walsh**

SVP & Head of Global Benefits, Hearst

## How the pandemic made mental health a priority at Hearst

Working as a journalist has always been a mentally and emotionally challenging career path, but coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic brought these issues to the forefront at many media organizations.

When one particularly overwhelmed colleague reached out for help at Hearst Newspapers, they were directed to a resource that’s given to many journalists—not just at Hearst—for mental health support. **But the resource didn’t offer enough support around trauma.**

To better understand their journalists’ needs, Hearst ran focus groups, which revealed the stress and danger their work entails, and the emotional toll it can take.

Hearst was highly thoughtful about its criteria for selecting a proven mental health solution. **“We’re very data-driven, so we wanted a vendor that aligned to that,”** Maria explains. Hearst also wanted to solve for access, which meant being able to find a provider quickly. This had been challenging in large metropolitan areas like New York City and San Francisco, where colleagues were waiting for weeks or even months for a therapy appointment.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, Hearst needed a mental health solution that would offer precise mental health care as quickly as possible. The company chose **Spring Health**, which is personalized to each enrolled member, and has **evidence-based results** and **proven net-positive financial ROI**.



## Customizing care: Why Hearst needed a tailored mental health solution

According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, the national average wait time for a therapy appointment is **48 days** in the U.S.—**far too long when people have acute mental health needs like trauma support**. Since switching to Spring Health, Hearst colleagues and their dependents can now make a **therapy appointment in an average of 1.3 days** and a **medication management appointment in 1.8 days**.

To help ensure Hearst colleagues find the right provider fit from the start, they can select from Spring Health's extensive directory, which includes **provider credentials, areas of specialization, languages spoken**, and other details.

Spring Health's **data-driven provider matching technologies** help enrolled members and their dependents identify clinicians and coaches who could be a good fit. This helps ensure **therapeutic alliance**, which is the **primary predictor of positive clinical outcomes, along with continuity of care**.

To help support long-term success after Hearst colleagues have accessed their eight covered therapy visits each year, they can continue to work with their in-network therapist at a lower cost. This strong focus on provider fit contributes to the high ratings Hearst colleagues gave to Spring Health's care teams in 2023—an average of **9.3/10**.

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Spring really stepped up to that challenge. I hadn't even thought that we could do that. We wanted someone highly trained in trauma and PTSD who could speak to journalists, and *it was like finding a unicorn*.

**Maria Walsh**

SVP & Head of Global Benefits, Hearst

## The value of hiring a dedicated in-house clinician

Once Spring Health was rolled out for Hearst's colleagues, journalists began to share that, although they had faster access to mental health resources, they still needed more—specifically, therapists who understood their unique culture and experience.

Spring Health worked with Hearst to develop a very specific job description for an in-house clinician who was highly trained in trauma and PTSD and licensed in both California and Texas.

Spring Health found **Mariah Winslow**. Based at the San Francisco Chronicle, Mariah has dual-state licensing, so she can support Hearst colleagues at the *Houston Chronicle*, *Plainview Herald*, and *San Antonio Express-News* as well.

Shortly after Mariah was brought on, a Hearst colleague tweeted about their new in-house clinician. This led to **coverage in Poynter**, celebrating the much-needed mental health support in journalism. The praise internally has been just as positive.

**“Mariah is the best therapist I've ever worked with,”** a Hearst colleague says. **“In the last few months, I've made more progress, found more inner peace, than I have with any therapist I've ever worked with. I've processed a lot of trauma, and am finding my way to actual happiness.”**

Another adds, **“Mariah is leading me to be a happier, less stressful person with more purpose to improve my current emotional and physical well-being.”**

Mariah, who says her role as in-house clinician has been a career highlight, feels like her mission is closely aligned with that of the journalists. **“I'm always curious about stories and people telling me more about their lives,”** she shares.

**“I hope that, more than anything, I can really help people understand that there's enough space for what they're going through, too. Just because you're taking care of other people's stories doesn't mean your story isn't important.”**

## Reducing mental health stigma in journalism

Spring Health’s partnership has helped normalize talking about stress and trauma at Hearst. Today, mental health is embedded into the company’s culture. “Leadership has really helped in that,” Maria shares. “It’s no longer taboo.”

As Hearst’s in-house clinician, Mariah also plays a key role in keeping stigma at bay, including:

- Driving larger conversations around mental health
- Holding sessions for HR and other leaders on how to create a culture of care and respond in an empathetic and trauma-informed way
- Providing support with critical incident response
- Helping drive awareness about the mental health support available to Hearst colleagues through newsletters and home mailers

## Measuring Hearst’s engagement and progress over time

Hearst colleagues start their Spring Health experience by taking a short, clinically-validated assessment that screens for over 12 different clinical issues and generates a personalized care plan. This ensures each colleague receives the care they need.

To track progress over time, enrolled colleagues are asked to reassess how they’re doing on a regular cadence—about every two weeks. This data is critically important to determine return on investment and make informed decisions for the future.

“For us, it’s all the indicators,” Maria says. “What we’ve seen in just two visits is a really nice increase in our colleagues saying they’re feeling better.”

From a usage standpoint, Hearst colleagues have been very receptive and engaged with Spring Health’s solutions. “We have an almost 30% engagement in our mental health solution,” Maria adds. “With the traditional EAP, it was less than 2%.”

## The bottom line of wellness: ROI insights and clinical outcomes

As more and more Hearst colleagues access mental health care, one might expect a rise in health plan costs—but this didn’t happen.

Instead, Hearst saw a **substantial decrease in overall health care spending**, largely due to reduced physical health expenses. This reduction compensated for the increased mental health costs and fees for Spring Health’s program, leading to a **net-positive ROI** and highlighting the important link between mental and physical health. Smarter mental health spending not only supports the mental well-being of Hearst’s colleagues, but also leads to lower physical health-related expenses overall.

**30%** of all colleagues are enrolled in Spring Health

**84%** of those enrolled completed a clinical assessment

**65%** of those enrolled participated in one or more therapy sessions

*Of Hearst colleagues enrolled in Spring Health:*

	DEPRESSION	ANXIETY
Improved symptoms	87%	83%
Improved to mild or no symptoms	62%	58%

From an ROI perspective, Spring Health helped Hearst **save \$283 per member per month**, **recover an average of 140 productive hours per member per year**, and **lower turnover** for those in care by 75%.



## Partnering for better outcomes in mental health care

The data demonstrates that Spring Health is working for Hearst colleagues. The solution is paving the way for a future where mental health care is more **personalized, accessible, and effective**, ultimately leading to healthier, happier colleagues.

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[Watch this video](#) to hear how the unique needs of journalists were heard by the Hearst Newspapers HR team, and how having a therapist on-site has changed their lives.

PLAY VIDEO ►

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Spring Health has been the **perfect vendor**. What they're doing is really different from other providers. We sometimes ask for very specific things, and they've always been supportive, always willing to hear us out and to partner with us.

Maria Walsh

SVP & Head of Global Benefits, Hearst

