

# SAMARITAN: A LOOK AT MEMBER EXPERIENCE

SAMARITAN is a digital health tool designed to help people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to reach their health and housing goals. It provides Members with financial and social support through care managers at health clinics. An independent evaluation team performed interviews in 2023 and early 2024. Members shared about their experiences using Samaritan.

## Most Members rated their experience with Samaritan a 10/10.

Their reasons included:

- Feeling less lonely because of getting messages of encouragement
- Improved quality of life because of money they received, feeling physically and mentally healthier, and having more trust in the community and community services.
- Working well with their care managers on health and housing goals by getting help with referrals and appointments and having someone to check on them.



*"I first thought Samaritan was scary and unbelievable, like is this really happening? ...They told me they're going to give me reminders for my appointments and medications, nobody ever does that for me before. It is amazing."*

*"When I wanted to buy pet food, as a homeless person, people thought I was crazy for wanting to feed my cats. Samaritan let me buy things that mattered to me that weren't a necessity."*

## Money from Samaritan was the biggest benefit.

These bonuses helped Members:

- Get to appointments, work toward their housing goals, and buy some non-essential items (like restaurants, pet food, plants).
- Have freedom and flexibility to choose how to spend funds (examples included utility bills, food, kids' school supplies, specialty eyeglasses).



Words of encouragement from the community were very meaningful to Members, sometimes more than the money.

Some Members:

- Received text messages at just the right time that they needed encouragement, helping them feel less alone.
- Built ongoing relationships with community “samaritans” who sent messages motivating Members to achieve their health and housing goals.
- Saved messages to look back on during hard times.



Samaritan helped Members build confidence in themselves and the health care system.

Members reported:

- Getting better at trusting others, asking for help, and choosing their doctors.
- Greater trust and confidence in their health care provider.

*“The encouragement is something I look forward to and sometimes helps me get through my day...I used to think nobody cares (about) what I am going through. Now, I don’t have to ball up everything inside. I tell them how much I appreciate them sending a note and encouraging me.”*

*“I told my care manager about my hypertension and anxiety and she said, ‘be calm, you can see the doctor, you don’t have to go to the hospital.’... I don’t get all upset when I go to the doctor no more.”*

Some members had suggestions for making the program even better.

- Open communication with their care managers about the money on their debit cards (how much, budgeting tips).
- Opportunities for closer relationships with community members through voice messages or identifying donors.



The full Samaritan report can be found online at the following [link](#).



California Health Care Foundation

