

HOME HEALTH CARE

VNS Health Enhances Patient Outcomes With Virtual Coaching Program For Heart Disease Caregivers

Joyce Famakinwa, Oct 28, 2025

VNS Health's Center for Home Care Policy & Research has helped the company develop an advanced and ever-evolving care delivery model.

The latest example of the research center's innovation is a virtual coaching program called ViCCY, designed to help family caregivers of people with heart failure and cognitive impairment manage stress and improve their well-being. The program has already improved patient outcomes.

The prevalence of health diseases among older adults has been well-documented

"Heart disease remains the primary cause of death in the United States and worldwide," Dr. Barbara Riegel, senior research scientist at the Center for Home Care Policy & Research, told Home Health Care News. "Much of my interest is that it's such a huge patient population with so many issues going on, and such strong implications for our health systems."

New York-based VNS Health is a full-service nonprofit home-based care organization. On any given day, the company has over 73,000 patients, members and clients in its care.

VNS Health launched its [Center for Home Care Policy & Research](#) 33 years ago. In that time, the research center has amassed over \$60 million in external funding and has published over 500 articles in peer-reviewed journals. Riegel received the American Heart Association's 2025 clinical research prize for her work around self-management and caregiving for cardiovascular disease.

For Riegel, one aspect of heart disease that has not received sufficient attention is the toll on family caregivers, which can lead to conditions including depression, reduced quality of life and a greater risk for cardiovascular events and chronic conditions, according to the [American Heart Association](#).

Riegel and VNS Health's research team recently received a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to test its virtual coaching program and are already seeing positive outcomes.

"We're actually seeing a real impact on the caregivers, decreasing their stress, improving their self-care, improving their mental health," Riegel said. "We're also seeing that when we improve self-care in caregivers, we're also actually able to improve outcomes in the patients."

Margaret McDonald, associate vice president at the Center for Home Care Policy & Research, added that engaging caregivers in care processes to improve outcomes is VNS Health's responsibility as a home-based care provider.

“[For home-based care providers], it’s a constant look at what the evidence base is to strengthen the interventions that they’re going to provide, and where they’re going to put their investments,” she said.

Ultimately, McDonald believes that interventions to support family caregivers are vital.

“It really leverages available resources all around,” she said. “I think it expands views on what can be done.”

VNS Health is not the only home-based care provider to recognize the importance of engaging family caregivers.

Companies like Senior Helpers, Aveanna Healthcare Holdings Inc. (Nasdaq: AVAH), and Family & Nursing Care are all [interacting with family caregivers](#) in some form or fashion. This includes things like specialized training programs and participation in state Medicaid programs.

Other home-based care companies have also focused on cardiac care in the home. In 2023, at-home care startup MedArrive [partnered](#) with Heartbeat Health to bring on-demand cardiovascular services into the home, for example.

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