



MHP SALUD

CommCare for an Integrated Approach to Improving
Community Health



OVERVIEW

For the last 35 years, nonprofit organization MHP Salud has implemented Community Health Worker (CHW) programs to support underserved Latino communities across the United States. From case management for older adults to assistance navigating the Health Insurance Marketplace, MHP Salud's CommCare application keeps track of participants across various community-based health initiatives, including referrals to external organizations.

MHP Salud has increased enrollment in public assistance and health insurance programs and continues to offer support to over 5,000 Latino Americans annually struggling with mental health issues, chronic disease, and other health challenges.

SUMMARY



LOCATION

United States



SECTOR

Maternal & Child Health, Nutrition, Reproductive Health, Gender-Based Violence



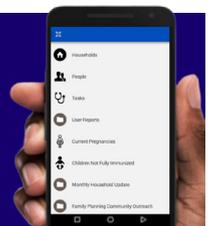
PARTNERS

MHP Salud



FEATURES

Case Management, Data Collection, Referrals, Conditional Alerts



NUMBER OF USERS (TO DATE)

25 CHWs serving 5,000 program participants

PROBLEM

The communities that MHP Salud serves are often rural, primarily Spanish-speaking, and burdened by existing health disparities and environmental barriers. In 2018, about 80% of participants MHP Salud served reported an annual household income below \$25,000, and over half were uninsured when they enrolled. The existing health infrastructure is difficult for these communities to access, and when they do, to navigate.

Additionally, in attempting to overcome these obstacles, participants could be enrolled in multiple initiatives without CHWs and program managers having any way to keep track of all of the services they were receiving. At any one time, a person could be receiving information about domestic violence from one CHW and diabetes management support from another without any record connecting the two efforts.

SOLUTION

MHP Salud's initial goal when they were founded in 1983 was to improve health and increase access to care for these underserved communities by developing and implementing innovative health promotion programs with a firm commitment to collaboration and resource-sharing. Since the beginning, these programs have relied on the CHW model, which encourages community members to offer health information and support to their neighbors. Because of their shared socioeconomic and cultural background, CHWs have an unusually strong understanding of their communities, and community members trust them to serve as a guide through the complex world of healthcare in the United States.



APP OVERVIEW

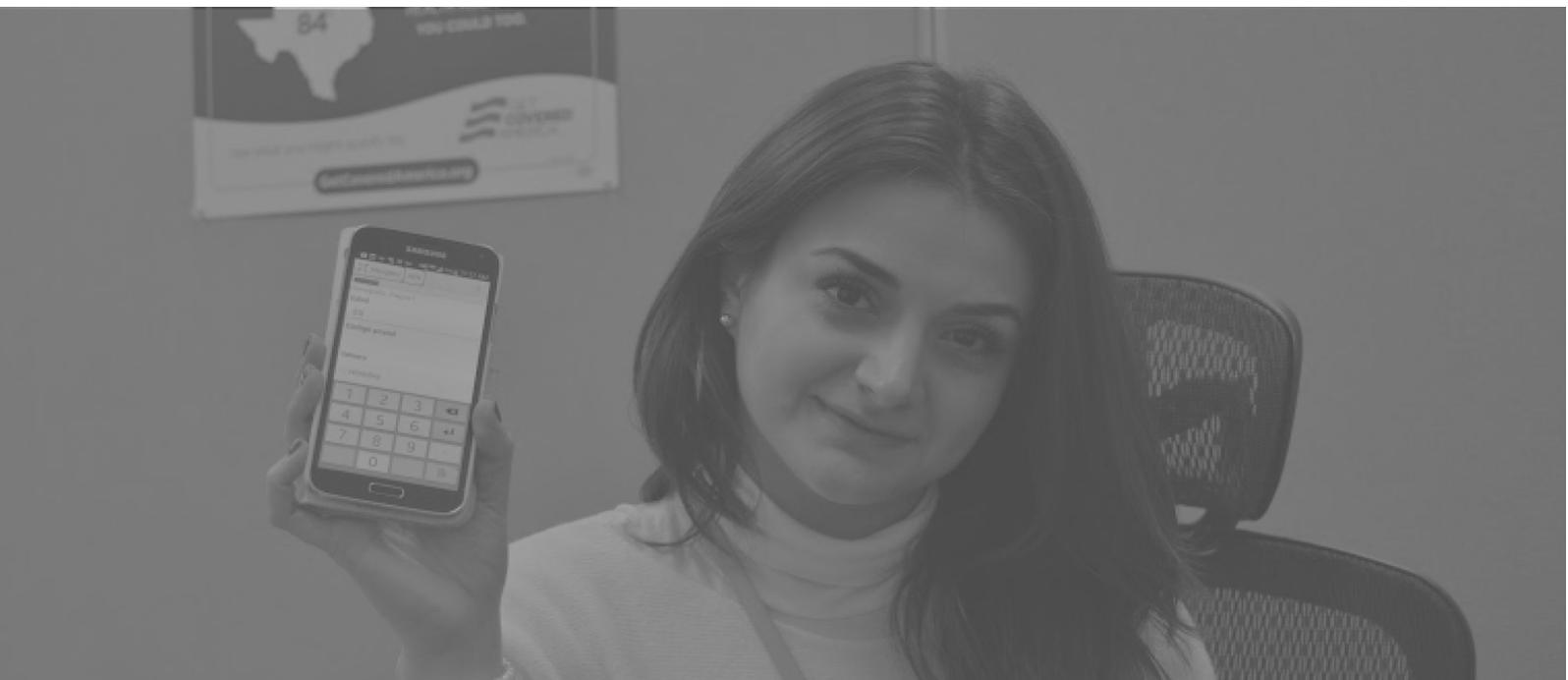
For years, CHWs ran these programs with only pen and paper. While their efforts made a difference in their communities, they suffered from the problems commonly associated with paper-based initiatives – human error, delays in data submission, etc. To combat these issues, MHP Salud partnered with Dimagi to create a mobile app to unify this process, making it faster and more accurate. The application registers the community members in MHP Salud's system, leads the CHWs through the proper forms, and keeps track of participants across initiatives.

Importantly, CHWs can complete any of the forms in CommCare with or without an internet connection. This capability is important, given that some of MHP Salud's initiatives occur in rural areas where an internet connection is not guaranteed. If the forms are completed offline, they are synced when the CHW returns to a location with an internet connection.

To register a participant in MHP Salud's CommCare application, a CHW completes a Client Intake form for that participant, including basic questions on demographics, health care access, social determinants of health, and feelings of empowerment. The majority of these questions are repeated on a Client Exit form when a participant completes services with MHP Salud, allowing comparison of measures before and after MHP Salud services.

In MHP Salud's application, all CHWs participate in case sharing. This means that although one CHW will initially serve and register a participant in CommCare, any other CHW who interacts with that same participant can update the participant's case. Collectively, these interactions may address the same health outcome or various health outcomes.

Further, CHWs use CommCare to record referrals to community resources and assistance with applications for public benefits, as well as the results of the referrals and application assistance upon follow up. MHP Salud's app uses the "child cases" feature of CommCare to tie this information to each participant. This structure not only allows MHP Salud to see the full scope of services provided to each participant and the result, but also to analyze results in light of participants' identified needs related to social determinants of health.



FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

In 2019, MHP Salud incorporated CommCare’s “child case” feature into its app structure. The impetus for this change was the need to more precisely track application assistance and resource referral activity within the app’s overall case management structure.

The child case feature allows the team to track and follow up on each referral separately. When a CHW registers a case and then refers that person for additional services, each of those referrals generates a new sub-case, or “child case,” which allows the CHW to review each pending resource referral separately. To debunk a common misconception, the term “child case” only indicates that the new case (or referral) is recognized as being tied to the original case and not that it has anything to do with serving children specifically.

When a CHW clicks on the case detail for each referral, they can see right away the information they need to complete their follow-up, such as the client name, phone number, and resource or service required (for example, as in the screenshots below).

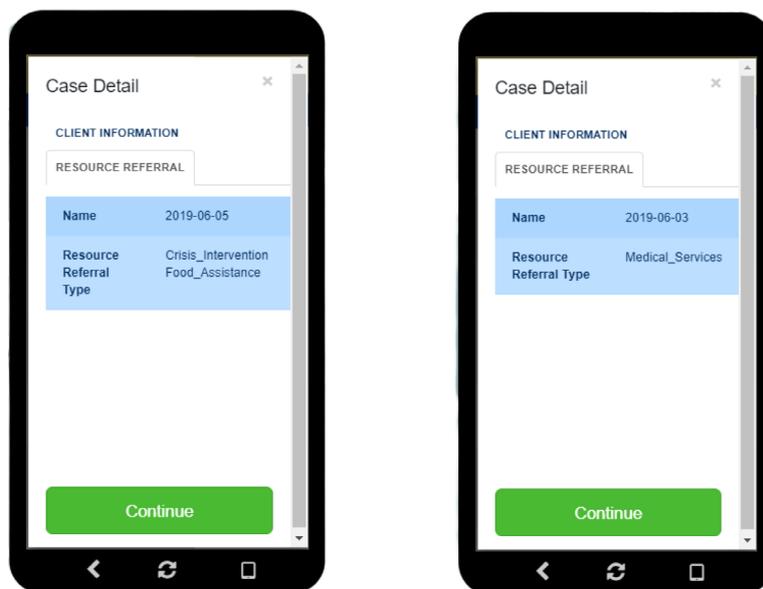


Figure: ‘Case Details’ adapt to the referral information required for a follow-up

To make sure that CHWs follow up on each new referral they generate, the team at MHP Salud developed their app to auto-generate a conditional alert message to remind the CHWs about the referral after 15 days. The CHW would then contact the participant to find out whether or not services were received, completing a Resource Referral Follow-up form to document the outcome and close out the child case.

IMPLEMENTATION

Because of the way the project receives its funding, MHP Salud's initial approach to implementing CommCare involved creating an application for each individual health initiative. During a typical year, there were approximately 10 different grant-funded initiatives operating across multiple states, each addressing a different health topic with its own team of CHWs and CommCare application and collectively serving about 5,000 participants per year.

While the transition to CommCare immediately decreased the amount of time CHWs spent filling out forms and submitting data, there was still no way to track the participants receiving multiple services across initiatives. In 2017, MHP Salud decided to translate the individual applications into their own forms under the umbrella of a single application. Using CommCare's case management features, CHWs now register participants to the application and simply select the proper follow-up forms based on the initiatives that the participants are enrolled in.

This approach allows for the same participants to be easily served by multiple initiatives under the umbrella of a single Health Outcome Program depending on their needs and the recommendation of the CHWs.



IMPACT

MHP Salud's initial introduction of a CommCare app immediately improved the speed of data collection, the leadership and digital literacy of CHWs in their communities and teams, and most importantly, the scale and scope of services beneficiaries received:

1

Data submission times (& costs) plummeted

The ease of use of the mobile forms led to an 89% decrease in time spent filling out and submitting forms – alone saving MHP Salud more than \$14,000.

2

Digital literacy and leadership improved

When the program launched, only two CHWs had smartphones, but those who had never used a smartphone quickly became experts, helping to train the rest of their teams in proper usage. Today, all 25 CHWs currently employed by MHP Salud use smartphones as an integral part of their daily workflow.

3

Scope of care increased

By spending less time submitting forms and sorting through all their paper forms, CHWs were able to spend that time providing more extensive service to their communities. Further, program managers, who previously entered the paper forms into computer spreadsheets, were able to invest that time in more meaningful tasks.

4

Added insight into participant health services

Thanks to CommCare's case management capabilities, MHP Salud has a better understanding of all of the services and referrals each participant receives, as well as the combined effect these have on health outcomes.



WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY

“The CommCare app allows me to be more efficient in keeping track of our clients in order to provide quality service...CHWs can collect information on community needs and how the CHW can assist -- for example, with applying for benefits or referrals to agencies such as food banks and clinics for families with no insurance.”

Linda Medrano
PROMOTORA DE SALUD

“I have experienced the value of CommCare to MHP Salud from multiple perspectives. As a former program manager during our pen-and-paper days, I spent hours each month entering paper forms into Excel. Today’s program managers are instead able to focus on monitoring the data and analyzing meaningful outcomes. In my current role as data analyst, I appreciate how CommCare’s validation functionality and ability to make questions required keeps data entry errors and missing data to a minimum -- which advances our ultimate goal of using the CHW model to achieve measurable health outcomes.”

Rachel Udow
DATA REPORTING ANALYST

WITH THANKS TO

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