

Mobile Technology Boosts MHP's Community Health Worker Impact in Underserved Latino Communities

[MHP Salud](#), a national non-profit organization, aims to improve health of underserved Latino communities. Utilizing the Community Health Worker (CHW) model, MHP programs provide peer-led health education, increase access to health resources, and bring community members together with health providers, employers and policymakers to create positive changes.



MHP has a 30-year history of providing local, direct service CHW programs as well as national training and technical assistance in support of the CHW model. Some of MHP's current CHW programs include a Navigator program that helps people understand and access health insurance options made available through the Affordable Care Act Health Insurance Marketplace and a community-based Doula program that provides birth support to expecting mothers in the Rio Grande Valley.

Launching CommCare

MHP developed a [mobile app](#) two years ago to improve its internal data collection and evaluation processes. Prior to the development of the app, CHWs used paper forms to

collect participant data during community outreach. Paper forms required CHWs to spend valuable time performing data entry when they could have been conducting outreach and other programmatic activities.

With the goal of streamlining the data collection and analysis processes and improving data quality, MHP partnered with Dimagi, a social enterprise that makes open-source software to improve healthcare in developing countries and for the underserved. The organizations collaborated to adapt CommCare – a mobile app that allows CHWs to collect information about participants, including demographic information and referrals – to meet MHP's evaluation needs.

MHP is currently working with two health centers in New York and Illinois to pilot CommCare. The purpose of the pilot is to see how the app functions in a clinical setting as compared to a field setting and what types of changes are needed to better serve patients.

Organizational and Community Impacts

The app and the use of other mobile features have had a number of impacts on MHP.

For MHP

One of the most dramatic benefits for MHP as an organization has been the reduced time spent on data entry tasks. Following the implementation of the app, data entry time dropped from

nearly 900 hours to 98 hours annually. This reduction saved MHP approximately \$14,200 in staff time dedicated to data entry, which was used instead by program managers to take on more programs.

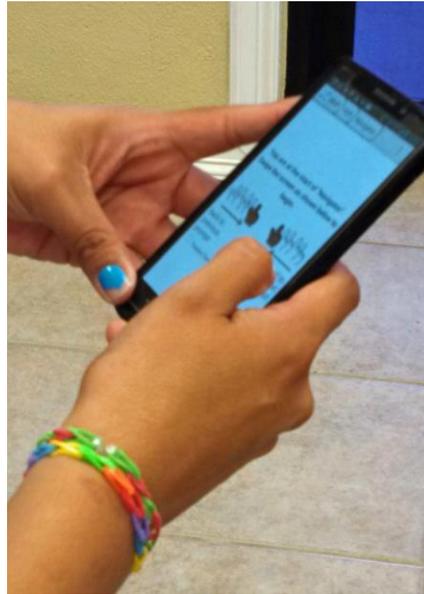
For CHWs

While the original intent was to improve data collection and evaluation for the program, CHWs benefited from gaining access to smart phone technology. The smart phones enabled CHWs to learn how to use new technologies and tap into digital resources. Prior to the project, only two CHWs had smart phones. Now, many are using their smart phones to find other health information, including audio-visuals, to better educate community members. Another positive impact was the leadership development impact among CHWs. Some CHWs were able to learn the app more quickly and take the lead on teaching others how to use it.

For the Community

Great use of mobile technology is also beneficial to the communities in which MHP works. CHWs are able to bring resources to community members in real time and diversify their approaches to health education by using interactive media, like YouTube, to provide information to community members.

The spread of smart phone apps demonstrates how technology can be a tool to



enhance peer support programs and bring resources and education to underserved communities. It can also help community-based organizations collect and analyze data more efficiently and improve programs for the future.

For more on the growing use of mobile apps and smart phones in peer support, read some of our recent blogs covering this trend:

[HealthCrew: A Peer Support App for Patient-Centered Medical Homes](#)

[Smart Phone Apps: The Latest Way to Deliver Peer Support](#)

[HelpAround Just Brought Your Peer Support Program to the Smartphone](#)

[mHealth Provides Decision Support, Improves Quality of Care](#)