

Transforming Medicaid Care with Technology

If you've been holding off on developing an app for your Medicaid audience because you think they aren't ready for it, it's time to think again. While there has historically been little interest in innovating technology in the Medicaid space for a number of reasons—the thought that Medicaid recipients lack access to the Internet and the perception that Medicaid recipients are less technically savvy, among others—the reality is much different. And state Medicaid leaders who are prepared to lead the technology charge will reap the rewards of streamlined processes, more satisfied patients and a more efficient system.

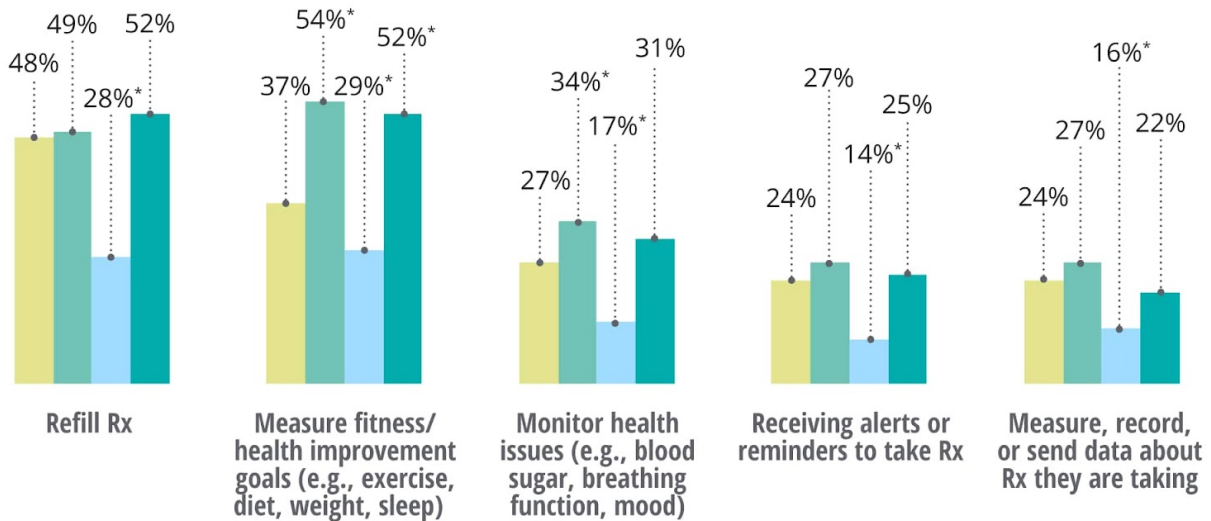
Medicaid Recipients are Embracing Technology

The Pew Research Center for Internet & Technology [reports that 95% of people who earn under \\$30,000 a year own a cellular phone, and 71% of those are smartphones](#). And it is [suggested that](#) “Thus, far from being disconnected, many Medicaid beneficiaries are likely using their smartphones for all or most of their internet activity, potentially making them an exceptionally receptive audience for mobile health apps.”

FIGURE 3

Medicaid beneficiaries' use of technology for health purposes is generally similar to that of individuals with employer and exchange coverage, and significantly higher than those who are uninsured

■ Medicaid ■ Exchange ■ Uninsured ■ Employer



Note: * Statistically different from Medicaid at the $p < 0.05$ level. This question was asked to all respondents, including those who said they did not own mobile technologies.

Source: Deloitte Center for Health Solutions' 2018 survey of health care consumers.

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Medicaid users who currently have access to health technology seem to be embracing it at a similar level to those who receive health insurance on the exchange or through their employer. Additionally, Medicaid recipients show overwhelming interest in future technologies that could help manage their health. Deloitte also reports that:

- *Nearly half (48%) of Medicaid beneficiaries use their technologies to refill prescriptions*
- *37% of Medicaid beneficiaries measure fitness and health improvement goals such as exercise, diet, weight, and sleep*
- *More than a quarter (27%) monitor health issues such as blood sugar, breathing function, and mood*
- *Nearly a quarter (24%) receive prescription alerts or reminders and measure, record, or send data about a prescription they are taking*
- *77% of Medicaid survey respondents indicated that they'd*

be “extremely” or “somewhat” interested in engaging with a virtual assistant to help identify symptoms and direct them to a physician or nurse

Technology Takeaways

With 1 in 5 Americans being covered by Medicaid, there's clearly a large market for apps and technologies that make it easier for patients to use. But what are the key takeaways state Medicaid leaders should know when it comes to technology, apps and reaching individuals on Medicaid? Here are a few tips:

Design for Mobile

Clearly, to best serve Medicaid recipients, responsive design is not an option but a necessity. Because the vast majority of your audience will be accessing your site and its functionality via a smartphone, it's imperative that you take a mobile-first approach to your user experience. From your Medicaid application process to your online portal where recipients can find a provider, check on their cost-sharing responsibilities and view their benefits, ensure that all of your features and functionality work seamlessly on mobile devices.

For a good example of a mobile app done well, check out Colorado Medicaid's [PEAKHealth app](#). PEAKHealth lets Medicaid recipients access their electronic Medicaid card for use on doctor's visits, update information including uploading pay stubs and get fitness, happiness, parenting and other tips aimed at helping them stay healthy.

As you're moving forward with your technology, remember to walk before you run. Ensure that your website is responsive and works well on mobile before investing the time and resources in an app. You'll have a much easier time converting

web users to app users if they can easily navigate your website via their mobile.

Consider condition-specific apps

There are many subpopulations within the larger Medicaid population—for example, patients suffering from mental health issues, pregnant women and people with disabilities. To address the specific, unique needs of these audiences, some states have created apps that are focused on providing information and support to a particular subpopulation.

For example, Wyoming Medicaid has an app aimed at pregnant women called [Due Date Plus](#) which, in addition to being connected to a 24/7 Nurse Line, also allows users to find providers, look up free community resources, and more. Reports on the effectiveness of the app showed [strong user engagement](#) and a return on investment of 3:1.

Think about the specific subpopulations in your state and then determine which, if any, may benefit most from technology. Then, identify existing resources that you could help leverage in a unique way.

Expand your focus

It's no secret to state Medicaid leaders that there are a number of social factors—education level, poverty, stability of employment, access to food, etc.—which have a huge impact on an individual's overall health. That's one reason why many states are collaborating with nonprofits and community-based organizations to either develop or incorporate technology that helps improve these social determinants of health.

For example, [Plentiful](#) is an app created through a collaboration of the United Way of NYC, several NYC government agencies and nonprofits. Aimed at helping eliminate long lines

and improve the service food pantries are able to provide, Plentiful allows people to make reservations to pick up food at their local food bank.

While New York's Medicaid program was not involved in the development of Plentiful, it's easy to see how NY Medicaid recipients would benefit from the technology. As you're working with your teams to develop innovative applications to improve your state's ability to provide access to care and resources, consider partnering with—or at least pointing to—other organizations in your state who are doing innovative things that would also serve your audience.

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Looking for other innovative technology ideas for transforming your state's Medicaid program? Join us at [MESC](#), August 19-22 in Chicago. CNSI will have representatives in the exhibit hall, speaking in sessions and at networking events; make sure to find us and say hello or [get in touch](#) to schedule an appointment.