

Text Messaging to Promote Engagement & Retention in Diabetes Prevention Program's Lifestyle Change Program

A 1705 NACDD Success Story



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHRONIC DISEASE DIRECTORS**

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SUMMARY: NACDD is one of 10 organizations awarded a five-year cooperative agreement from CDC (DP17-1705) to scale the National DPP in underserved areas. NACDD supported Wellpass to create a texting support program to encourage retention and success in the National Diabetes Prevention Program's (National DPP) lifestyle change program. NACDD developed a 52-week program delivered through two to three text messages each week to engage participants, provide continuous cues to action, and to improve retention and outcomes.

Texting is an effective, innovative, low-cost tool for health behavior reach and impact. Ninety-seven percent of Americans send at least one text per day, and more than 90% prefer texting to receiving phone calls. Texting especially is appropriate for underserved populations, given low income populations send twice as many texts per day compared to those with higher incomes.

CHALLENGE: Drop-off for attendance at in-person National DPP lifestyle change program classes is high, yet engagement and attendance is associated with improved program outcomes. Retention also is critical for cost-effectiveness, as recruitment and in-person classes are expensive to conduct. Text messaging is a low-cost, high-reach, effective, and innovative way to keep participants engaged between classes as well as to address waning motivation or barriers to change. Thus, text messaging is an effective tool to address CDC Strategy 4: Increase Retention Rates in National DPP. Retention challenges are exacerbated for people with disabilities, who face unique structural barriers to recruitment, class attendance, and lifestyle changes. Consequently, a secondary focus was to make the text message program inclusive of persons with disabilities.

SOLUTION: Text messaging is an innovative and effective way to maintain engagement and improve physical activity, condition management, and weight loss outcomes. Unlike apps or websites, texting “pushes” out information to participants to trigger action and to catch participants when they may be losing motivation.

Wellpass began with scoping discussions with NACDD and state partners to identify common barriers to retention and to design the structure of the program to support National DPP lifestyle change programs. NACDD reviewed “Prevent T2” and “Prevent T2 For All” curriculums to identify key themes and topics. Content was developed with three primary goals: 1) reinforce program curriculum with practical tips, 2) maintain motivation and overcome barriers, 3) encourage class attendance and engagement.

NACDD chose a conversational, friendly, and supportive tone to mimic a peer, coach, or other form of social support. Messages were written to recognize, empathize, and overcome common barriers, such as a mid-week slump in motivation, peer pressure, lack of transportation or childcare, and busy schedules.

To ensure that text message content was written to be inclusive for persons with disabilities, content was reviewed by the Lakeshore Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for people with disabilities.



RESULTS: The texting program content has been designed, developed, built, and tested. Marketing and enrollment materials to promote the text message program to coaches and participants were distributed in late September 2018. NACDD also hosted several webinar trainings for state partners and lifestyle program coaches on the texting program. Participants will be enrolled in the texting support program beginning the first week of October 2018.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS: Success requires National DPP lifestyle coaches to enroll participants in the program. NACDD also will explore methods to expand the marketing and reach of the texting support program to continue expansion and availability.

Additionally, NACDD aims to continuously improve the program based on member feedback and interaction. The program content includes feedback questions to get participant data on improving message content and design. Feedback from participants, coaches, and NACDD will be incorporated to continually improve the member experience and effectiveness of the texting support program. In 2019, NACDD plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the texting program on improvements in class attendance, physical activity, and weight loss.

INVOLVEMENT IS KEY: To talk to NACDD, Wellpass, or National DPP LCP lifestyle coaches to learn about enrollment in the texting support program, contact info@chronicdisease.org.

“Feeling stuck? Get your head back in the game! Try a new workout class to change things up or ask a friend to be an exercise buddy. Look online for healthy recipes for your favorite takeout foods. Did you know you can make Lo Mein with zucchini noodles? Pizza with a cauliflower crust? Get creative!” – Example text message shared with program participants.