

SUCCESS STORIES

Achieving Healthcare Engagement Success with Specialty Populations

Taking culture into consideration

From our beginning 30 years ago as a Medicaid patient advocacy solution in a nonprofit health system to our work today with 30 million Medicare and Medicaid members in all 50 states, Carenet Health has always been rooted in serving the needs of distinct and often vulnerable populations.

That experience has given us extensive insights into how best to support both age-specific and culturally diverse healthcare consumers. While each health plan, each health system, each geographic region and each particular population may have its own set of unique challenges and opportunities, there are several engagement elements that we know to be universal:

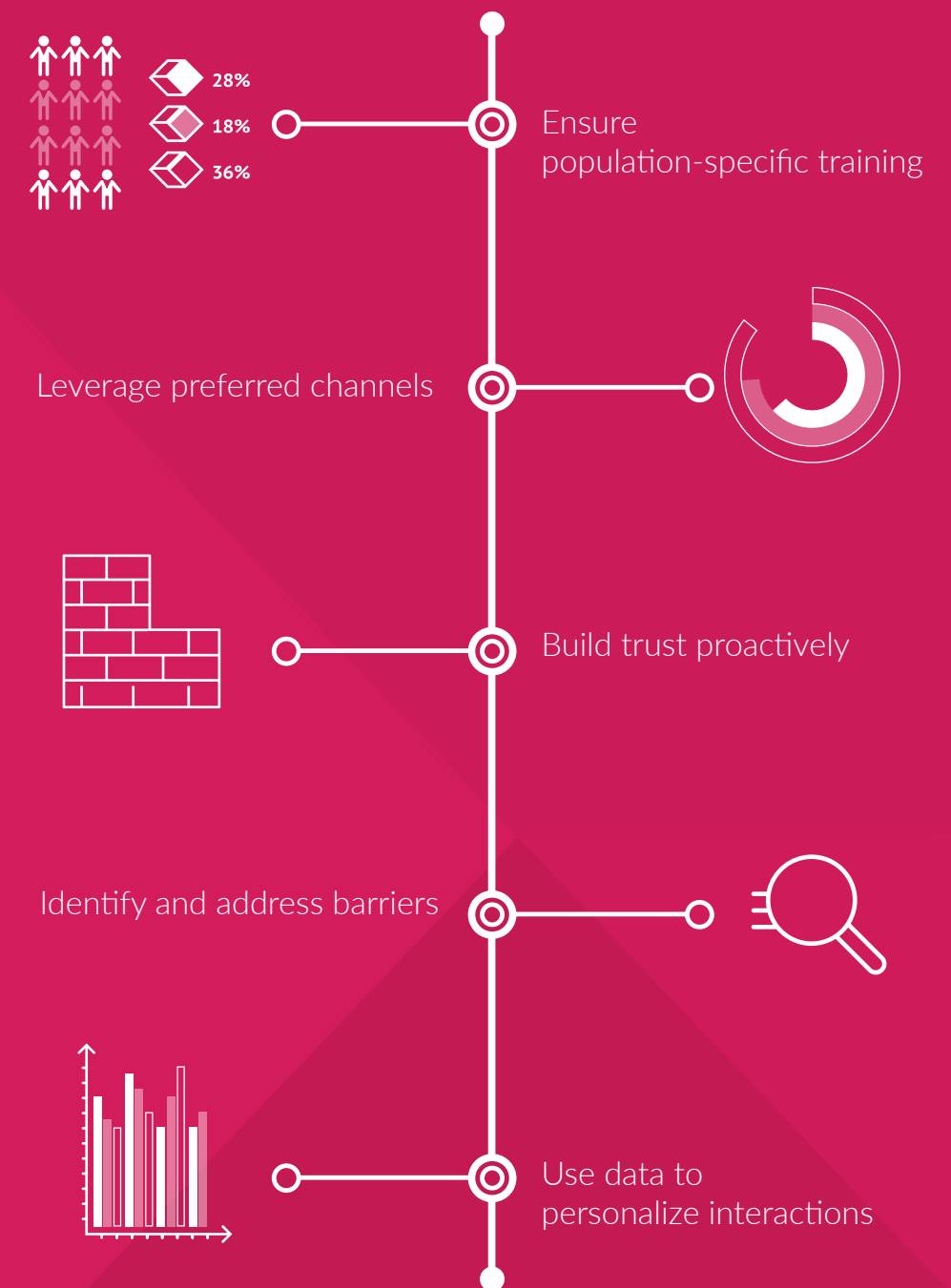
- The need for active listening and understanding
- The role of empathy and attentiveness, and
- The realization that one-size-fits-all engagement programs are rarely successful

Strategies in action

Read on for examples of how Carenet helped several healthcare organizations engage successfully with their distinctive populations—and gain ideas for how you can, too.



Factors to consider in specialized engagement design



01 SUCCESS STORY



Increasing the effectiveness of a Medicaid plan's health risk assessment strategy



First, connect through the population's preferred communication channel. Then, build trust that empowers meaningful conversations.

Medicaid plans serve many of society's lowest-income and most at-risk individuals and families. The population historically has a lower-than-average health literacy rate,¹ and more than 40% have reported they have no usual source of care, such as a primary care physician.² Reaching Medicaid members can also be challenging. Yet connecting with new members is especially critical to conducting health risk assessments (HRAs)—which lay the groundwork for the member relationship and the plan's ability to support member health and wellness.

That's why a large Medicaid plan asked Carenet to help improve its HRA completion rate in the two weeks after a member enrolls. Medicaid members' phone numbers often change frequently, so reaching them as soon as possible after enrollment is key (and a requirement in many states).

Carenet experts knew that reaching a Medicaid member with a one-on-one, human connection is still the best way to complete HRAs and discuss the personal information that can help address a member's health concerns. They also knew that most members use mobile phones as their communication lifelines. Several studies show that more than 95% of Medicaid members have a cell phone; nearly 80% have unlimited texting plans at any given time.³

With these factors in mind, Carenet implemented a two-channel outreach plan with members receiving three text messages over four days with information and links regarding the HRA request. Unanswered text messages were followed up with a personal phone call.

This trust-building approach, in which communication was established via text prior to attempting a phone call, primed the audience for conversation and resulted in a 40% increase in successful HRA completions.

1. Center for Health Care Strategies, Health Literacy Fact Sheets, accessed July 2021
2. *Medicaid as Seen Through the Eyes of Beneficiaries*, UnitedHealthcare Community & State report, accessed July 2021
3. Deloitte 2018 Survey of US Health Care Consumers

02 SUCCESS STORY



Fine-tuning the strategy for dual-eligibles in a Spanish-speaking population



When designing an outreach strategy, consider sources of trust and how those sources can be levers for action.

Preventive mammogram screenings are key for helping lower breast cancer rates. They're also an important quality measure for Medicare and Medicaid plans to help ensure members get the care they need.

Like many payer organizations, a large plan serving Medicare-Medicaid dual-eligible members was struggling to meet its mammogram completion goals for its population of low-income, over-65 women—many of whom spoke Spanish as their first language. After multiple attempts to improve compliance—through direct mail, automated reminders, phone calls and even taking screening vans into targeted communities—50% of the targeted members had not completed their screening as the end of the year drew near.

Carenet experts understood that this population historically trusts physicians more than corporations and government entities like managed Medicare and Medicaid plans. When asked to help the

plan boost screenings, Carenet adjusted the outreach strategy and communication to indicate the reminder calls were being made on behalf of a referring physician (either the member's primary care physician or a physician employed by the plan).

Carenet also leveraged an engagement team that was fluent in Spanish, female and highly skilled in empathy, mammogram health literacy and age-sensitivity. The engagement specialists guided members through the process, coordinated appointment scheduling, helped remove transportation barriers and educated on next steps.

In a matter of weeks, the approach delivered a significant increase in performance by achieving 165% of the targeted number of appointments. Most importantly, the compassionate and persuasive interaction impacted members' lives for the better.

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Helping those with unstable housing after a natural emergency



When dealing with members in crisis:

- Ask them to repeat important points to ensure understanding and clarity on next steps
- Listen to members' stories to validate their experience and read between the lines to determine needs

When Hurricane Katrina hit the U.S. Gulf Coast, thousands of people were left homeless. This was an especially dire situation for members of the Medicaid population, many of whom were already living in unstable conditions. The natural disaster's devastation forced this population to relocate with no more than

the clothes on their back to the Houston area and other communities in East Texas. Many of the individuals were also experiencing stress unlike any they'd faced before, with no immediate access to their physicians, prescriptions and other care needs.

A large managed Medicaid plan asked Carenet to step in to help transition a population of low-income children with complex medical conditions who were now facing an unanticipated disruption in care.

Acting quickly, Carenet set up an engagement team to help members re-establish health and wellness management.

The team focused on essential needs first, like getting necessary prescriptions into members' hands with temporary refills and introducing members to the 24/7 nurse advice line to avoid unnecessary emergency department (ED) utilization.

With many regional pharmacies and physician offices closed due to the flooding and catastrophic damage, members also needed to connect with new practitioners. The team handled care coordination, appointment scheduling and transportation support. Carenet's ramp-up strategy ensured the outreach team was trained in trauma sensitivity, active listening and problem-solving.

The effort received high member satisfaction scores. Another benefit: Lower ED usage. More than 90% of those contacted said they would use the nurse advice line in the future to determine if they needed emergency care.

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It's important to demonstrate cultural understanding and establish a value-based rapport with every member interaction.

Supporting a rural Polynesian culture with telehealth services

The State of Hawaii is spread across seven different islands, with just 10% of its total land area classified as urban. Public transportation between areas can be a challenge, and the number of hospital EDs and urgent care centers is low. For the low-income population living in rural parts of the Aloha State, that means limited access to healthcare.

A nonprofit health plan serving 80,000 Medicare and Medicaid members, many of whom were native Hawaiians, asked Carenet to help fill this care gap with telehealth services. Carenet provided a 24/7 nurse advice service to triage symptoms and guide care for its medically underserved and often at-risk population.

To ensure the service was a success, Carenet developed comprehensive training for registered nurses, care coordinators and even health plan teams in Polynesian culture. In addition to leveraging custom-created communication tools, teams learned about frequently used words in the Hawaiian language and island geography (to facilitate making care transportation arrangements).

The telehealth solution consistently received more than 92% patient satisfaction, and the plan was able to save an estimated \$600,000 in unnecessary care costs annually due to guiding patients to the appropriate level of care. About 80% of all telehealth calls were handled with direction to non-emergency care resources.



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Addressing a Russian language barrier in the Pacific Northwest



To truly connect with an English-as-a-second-language population, think beyond language translators to cultural attitudes.

A group of regional communities in the Pacific Northwest was made up of a population that included a large number of Russian immigrants who spoke little English. A Medicaid and Medicare plan that served the area asked for Carenet's assistance to improve member completion rates for health risk assessments.

Acting as an extension of the plan and providing interpreters for translation, Carenet created an engagement team specially trained on this specific culture's values and, particularly, its deference to authority. For instance, these community members tended to respond with a "yes" to questions

out of cultural-based respect during a call, even though they might have disagreed with a health-related statement. Techniques were leveraged to move conversations beyond "yes" and "no" answers to establish valid responses. With continuous coaching, specialists were able to gently guide members through the risk assessments, ensuring they fully comprehended and completed each question.

The team's work garnered high member satisfaction and achieved 34,600 health assessment completions in just over 30 days.

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Current and past data insights can be instrumental when designing outreach strategies.

Ensuring the success of a time-sensitive, low-income, high-risk pregnancy program

The earlier in a pregnancy a mother-to-be seeks care, the better the health outcomes for both mother and baby. A Medicaid Prenatal Care Management program in the Midwest was aimed at addressing that need for low-income expectant mothers by encouraging vital pre-and post-natal care.

The program's care managers were tasked with helping members—many of them in their teens and early 20s—make doctor appointments and receive educational materials. When mothers enrolled in the program, they were 15% more likely to obtain recommended care.

But the plan needed assistance raising awareness of the program and signing up eligible expectant mothers. Carenet jumped in as the program enrollment team, optimizing the contact strategy and freeing up the care managers to focus only on addressing and maintaining care relationships once a member was in the time-sensitive program.

Caretet experts used historical and real-time data insights to fine-tune factors such as the best times and days to complete enrollments and the optimal time needed for an enrollment completion. For instance, if a member's address

included a university-residential ZIP code, call times would be adapted compared to a member living in an urban residential location.

At the same time, because pregnancy is so personal by nature, the team made sure the one-to-one enrollment efforts were focused on building trust, addressing fears and offering compassion.

Results were impressive, with a high monthly conversion rate. More than 60% of those with whom Carenet connected agreed to be enrolled.

Need more inspiration?

Be sure to browse our Carenet Health Resource Center found at [carenethealth.com](https://www.carenethealth.com).

More about Carenet Health

Caret Health is the nation's premier healthcare clinical and consumer engagement partner—providing 24/7 telehealth, engagement, clinical support and advocacy solutions on behalf of 250+ health plans, providers, health systems and Fortune 500 companies. More than 86 million healthcare consumers have access to our teams of engagement specialists, care coordinators, RNs and other licensed healthcare professionals each year.

How can we help your organization?

Email us today at marketing@carenethealthcare.com, call **800.809.7000** or learn more at [carenethealth.com](https://www.carenethealth.com).

