Using a Mobile-Technology Tool to Assist Meals on Wheels Drivers in Conducting Home Wellness Checks

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• Growing evidence that social determinants (e.g. nutrition, transportation, and housing) have a significant impact on health and well-being.

• Opportunity to leverage home meal-delivery programs, such as Meals on Wheels (MOW), to proactively identify and address unmet social needs and create partnerships with providers and payers to better support clients.

• We conducted a pilot study to evaluate the use of a mobile technology tool to assist drivers with client wellness checks during routine meal delivery.

Introduction

• A technology enhanced home meal-delivery service was conducted at two MOW sites. Implementation was staggered by 4-5 months across sites.

Site 1: Program with 3,000+ volunteer drivers that deliver meals to 3,000+ clients across urban, suburban, and rural areas in one county.
  • Sample: 5 routes, 35 drivers, 208 clients

Site 2: Program with 18+ paid drivers delivering meal to 600+ clients across several rural counties.
  • Sample: 16 routes, 18 drivers, 641 clients

Intervention

• MOW drivers were trained to used a mobile application that enabled them to submit electronic wellness alerts when they had a concern or noticed a change in a client’s health, safety, or well-being during meal delivery.

• Responses were sent electronically to a trained care navigator (CN), who followed up with clients, further assessed unmet needs, and connected clients with necessary services.

Results

• Site 1: Over an 11-month period, 168 wellness alerts were submitted for 48 clients across wellness categories (Figure 2), with 20 clients experiencing multiple alerts across time.

Conclusions

• This project demonstrates the feasibility of a scalable mobile application that enables drivers to conduct electronic wellness checks during routine meal deliveries and may serve as an early-warning system to mitigate or prevent adverse health events.

• Additional research is needed to determine the impact of addressing social determinants for MOW clients on health outcomes and costs.