

Digital Health Navigator Pilot Project Summary

Objective

The Kentucky Health Center Network (KHCN) has a Health Center Controlled Network (HCCN) grant objective from the Bureau of Primary Health Care to increase the number of member organizations with formal programs that help patients access and use digital health tools. However, limited staffing and the wide range of available digital tools have led many health centers to develop inconsistent, homegrown solutions without standardized training. Existing digital health training options often fall short of meeting the practical, day-to-day needs of community health centers.

To address these challenges and achieve the grant objective, KHCN reviewed multiple digital health navigator training programs and selected the Lift Wellness curriculum by DigitalLIFT (formerly Community Tech Network). This digital navigator training is a 12–15-hour asynchronous program delivered via a Learning Management System (LMS). Training modules included:

- Digital Navigators Overview
- Digital Equity and Healthcare
- Teaching Internet Safety and Responsibility
- LIFT Navigators
- Shadowing Digital Navigation
- Resource Packages
- Windows Advanced Curriculum

Pilot Program Overview

KHCN offered the training at no cost to participants through KHCN's HCCN Grant Funding. We recruited Community Health Workers (CHWs) due to their direct patient engagement and trusted role in addressing social and health needs. The pilot included an orientation meeting, course completion, and individual debrief interviews.

Seven participants from five KHCN member organizations completed the pilot:

- HealthFirst Bluegrass
- Health First Community Health Center
- Juniper Health
- Primary Plus
- Sterling Health Solutions

Debrief Interview Insights

Overall Value

Participants found the training accessible, relevant, and valuable—especially when collaborating with patients new to digital tools, older adults, and residents of rural areas. Participants appreciated the structured content, discussion elements, and multiple learning formats.

Participants strongly endorsed the training for CHWs, outreach staff, and enrollment specialists. They also saw value in training front office staff who assist patients with digital check in and patient enrollment. The training improved capacity to bridge the digital literacy gap.

Content Relevance

Participants agreed the training was relevant to their work and particularly beneficial for CHWs working in rural areas and with older populations. The curriculum encouraged new approaches to digital literacy challenges and reinforced their roles in guiding patients through digital healthcare resources.

Impact on Work

Participants reported notable improvements in their ability to support digital health navigation:

- Enhanced patient education on digital tools
- Improved screening and communication strategies
- More effective guidance on patient portals and online healthcare resources
- Increased use of resources like low/no-cost internet guides

Certification Considerations

There was strong support for making this training a specialized CHW certification. Digital navigation remains a significant barrier to healthcare access, and formal training would enhance CHWs' ability to assist patients. There were multiple benefits of certification. The training expanded the services CHWs can provide to patients, strengthened communication skill with patients and colleagues, increased credibility and standardization of digital navigation efforts, and increased trust between CHWs and patients.

Resource Utilization & Additional Training

Participants identified the most useful resources provided by the training including:

- Internet safety guidelines and digital literacy screeners
- Step-by-step guides and tiered learning approaches
- Low/no-cost internet lists
- Intake and assessment forms

Participants identified the following as additional training opportunities:

- Expanded content on patient portals specific to different facilities
- Specialized modules for older adults and non-English speakers
- More comprehensive guides for different phone types and operating systems
- Development of patient-friendly educational resources
- Training videos and an online resource database
- Rural specific strategies
- Peer networking opportunities for shared learning

Planned Digital Health Navigator Activities

Participants shared creative ways they could use the skills learned in the training:

- Patient Engagement and Communication Tools
 - Patient portal: Assist patients in requesting appointments, accessing test results, requesting refills, and sending messages
 - Secure Messaging Apps: Assist patients in using secure messaging apps for HIPAA compliant communication with care team
- Telehealth and Remote Care Services
 - Telehealth Platforms: Assist patients in scheduling and joining video or phone appointments
 - Remote Patient Monitoring: Instruct patients in appropriate use of RPM products and sharing data from the products (Bluetooth syncing etc.)
- Medication Management
 - Setting up medication reminders
 - Requesting refills digitally
- Health Apps
 - Assist patients in assessing and using health apps including:
 - Behavioral and mental health apps
 - Diabetes support
 - Activity apps
 - Nutrition apps and food loggers
 - Smoking cessation tools
- Insurance and Financial Services
 - Checking insurance coverage
 - Finding in-network providers
 - Paying medical bills online
- Digital Forms
 - Completing digital registration/check in forms
 - Using organization kiosks
- Group or Individual Device Education
 - Effective use of iPhone or Android phone
 - Using computers and tablets
 - Safe use of digital platforms
 - Identifying spam
 - Setting secure passwords
- Accessing Social Resources Online
 - Transportation
 - Food banks/panties
- Housing applications

Conclusion

The pilot demonstrated the value and effectiveness of digital health navigator training, particularly for CHWs. The pilot project supports training additional health center staff as digital navigators and formalizing the training as a specialized certification for Kentucky CHWs.

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