



TeleSalud: Direct Access to Language Services Model

Grantee Name: Molina Healthcare, Inc.

Brief Description of Paper:
(please use bullet points to highlight major points or lessons learned)

- While English speaking populations are accustomed to automated phone services, Spanish speaking populations are likely to hang up on automated services, because the practice of waiting in line for service is not congruent with their cultures. In health care, this could result in dissatisfaction and less optimal outcomes.
- The TeleSalud demonstration project was formed in April 2004 as a separate department within Molina Healthcare of California offering direct accessibility for medical interpreting services to address the health and language needs of the underserved Limited English Proficiency Latino population.
- TeleSalud offers three primary services exclusively in Spanish: nurse advice, medical interpretation, and member services. TeleSalud's 24-hour contact center enables direct access to a Spanish-speaking Registered Nurse to help with members' health and interpreter needs at all times.
- TeleSalud staff orientation and training includes program criteria using the California Healthcare Interpreting Association's (CHIA) Healthcare Interpreting Guidelines, published by The California Endowment. This training will be conducted for all bilingual, dual-role staff with direct member contact in Molina's clinics, call centers, and member service areas.
- TeleSalud/Nurse Advice is being rolled out to all our plans in the states in which we operate, demonstrating replicability of the model while serving each health plan's specific needs.

TeleSalud: Direct Access to Language Services Model

Hablamos Juntos Lessons Learned

One of Molina Healthcare, Inc.'s core competencies is to serve as a nationally recognized leader in the provision of healthcare services in a culturally competent way. In 2002, a review of utilization statistics of Molina's outsourced nurse advice line found that while overall utilization of the service was good, when usage of Language Line Services by Spanish-speaking members (Latinos) was examined, it was very low. While 45% of our membership is Latino (primarily of Mexican origin) with a declared Spanish language preference, a Spanish interpreter had been requested in fewer than two percent of calls. We concluded that this low utilization suggested a barrier for our members in accessing nurse advice services. We also knew from previous research that while English speaking populations would use automated phone services, Spanish speaking populations were more likely to hang up on automated services. The practice of waiting in line for service was not congruent with their cultures, which could affect their access to healthcare.

TeleSalud was formed as a separate department within Molina Healthcare of California offering medical interpreting services to address the health and language needs of the underserved Limited English Proficiency Latino population. The TeleSalud service offering was developed with the Hablamos Juntos program to expand the language capacity currently present in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. TeleSalud initially offered three primary services exclusively in Spanish, nurse advice, medical interpretation, and member services. The TeleSalud demonstration project was begun as a 24-hour contact center to enable direct access to a Spanish-speaking Registered Nurse to help address a Spanish-speaking member's health and interpreter needs at all times.

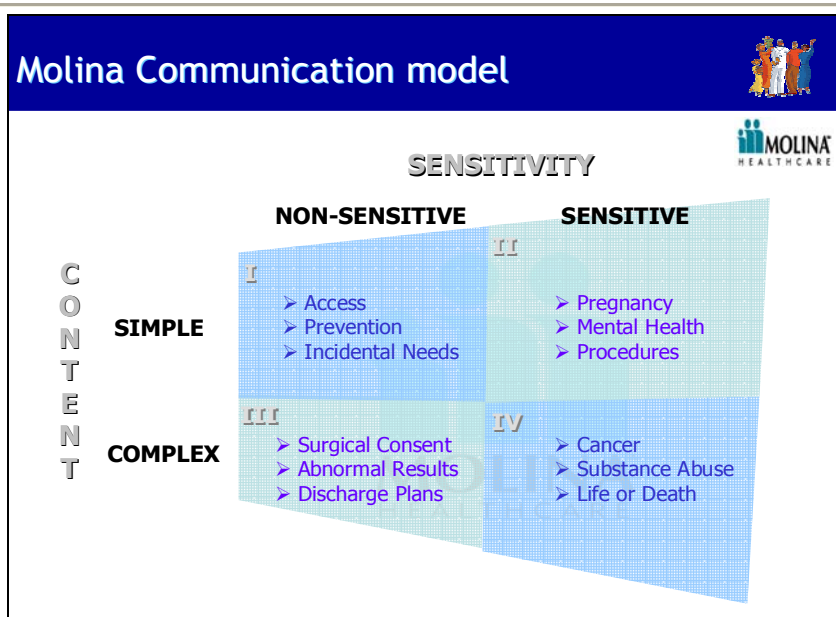
Program Description

TeleSalud was conceived to provide our members service in their declared language of preference with 24 hour live direct access to a Registered Nurse for nurse advice and interpretation assistance. TeleSalud is an adjunct to the variety of approaches used at Molina so our members have language assistance available at any point of service in the continuum of care. Direct access to highly trained nurses acting as interpreters and educators at any point along the continuum of care is demonstrated through this program.

Main Components

Interpreter Services are structured according to the Molina Communication Model (see figure), in which Bilingual Registered Nurses are needed to perform complex medical interpreting and education. If members find themselves in situations where no Spanish interpreter is available for a medical visit, ER or pharmacy encounter, our nurses are also available to interpret, educate, and assist. The model empowers members to call for such assistance directly and at no cost to themselves or care-rendering providers.

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Hablamos Juntos Lessons Learned*



Molina Healthcare, Inc. has implemented TeleSalud Nurse Advice using a two-tier model with non-clinical staff to receive the intake calls and registered nurses to receive calls requiring interpreting, clinical assessment or intervention. The two-tiered model provides direct, live access at this point of entry into the company for services. Calls from Spanish speakers are answered in Spanish and routed to bilingual RNs for completion.

A centralized data system provides documentation capabilities and tracking. It is designed to support data security, integrity, and confidentiality in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requirements. All calls into the department are recorded as part of the Quality Improvement Program for monitoring purposes and coaching as indicated.

The nurse advice registered nurses follow nationally recognized adult and pediatric protocols for nurse advice. The guidelines are based on scientifically valid and documented clinical principles and are appropriate for use by registered nurses. Physicians completely review the nurse advice protocol regularly and provide updates approximately every six months.

Genesis and Growth

We established a "team of experts" from internal departments to work through the details of the implementation and the day-to-day processes for purposes of integration into sustainable processes and activities. Once the business plan was developed, Molina Healthcare recruited and trained bilingual clinical staff. Because this project involved development of an entirely new department in a very short time frame, lessons learned were primarily related to business expansion. Our services have expanded from the Spanish speaking demonstration group to include all our members.

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Hablamos Juntos Lessons Learned

Hiring and Staffing

The TeleSalud core staff includes an exchange operator who receives the call, the RN providing interpretation services and nurse advice, and management staff. The operators are responsible for live telephone access into the Clinical Telephone Services Department in accordance with defined policies and procedures. The Registered Nurses are licensed in the state in which clinical telephone nurse advice services are provided. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Providing clinical telephone nurse advice in accordance with approved protocols
- Providing interpreter services for complex medical situations.
- Assisting the members in obtaining access at the appropriate level of care as directed by protocols.
- Providing other health information to support member wellness.

RNs must meet professional qualifications and minimum experience requirements. Bilingual fluency is a requirement for most of our positions. Interviews are conducted in Spanish by our language coaches, and test interactions (i.e. simulated nurse advice call) are conducted in Spanish. Hiring for the demonstration project went as planned. As the demonstration project success led to the implementation of a company wide service, the department has grown rapidly, and the scope of services continues to evolve.

Training

Training includes a review of the California Healthcare Interpreter Standards. Extensive training on confidentiality has been completed and documented as part of HIPAA training in 2003 and 2004. Molina tested bilingual dual-role staffs working in the clinical office setting and member services using the LISA tool presented by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As interpreter standards are developed specifically for telephone interpreters, these will be applied to our operations. Interpreter competency for the nurses is determined using the coach model with coaches selected according to criteria learned from other Hablamos Juntos grantee sites.

TeleSalud staff completes orientation and training specific to their job functions, lasting up to 30 days, with an additional coaching and review period for RNs. Training program criteria using the California Healthcare Interpreting Association's (CHIA) Healthcare Interpreting Guidelines, published by The California Endowment are being finalized.

Ongoing quality monitoring is being performed by Language Coaches during TeleSalud nurse orientation with side-by-side dual listening to calls, as well as review of call recordings. Inter-rater reviews are regularly conducted as well as regular meetings of TeleSalud nurses to discuss issues surrounding how to express certain concepts in Spanish to speakers from different countries of origin (word selection).

TeleSalud/Nurse Advice is being implemented in all states in which Molina operates. Since going live in April 2004, we have tripled our size and made significant additions to our infrastructure. Teams have been organized in each state and oriented to the project history, vision, and implementation plan. Policies, procedures, and individualized workflows which clearly demonstrate how the project functions have resulted in replicability while serving each health plan's specific needs. The Direct Access to Language Services model has been well received and is a successful model in overcoming language barriers.