

# MOLINA HEALTHCARE, INC

## TELESALUD: A DIRECT ACCESS TO LANGUAGE SERVICES MODEL BUSINESS CASE CONSIDERATIONS

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### FINANCIAL OUTCOMES PROGRESS SUMMARY

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#### Background

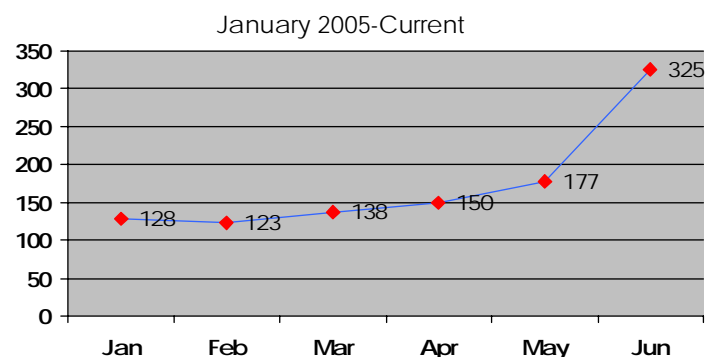
TeleSalud was formed as a separate department within Molina Healthcare of California to offer services to address the health and language needs of the underserved Limited English Proficiency Latino population. The TeleSalud service was developed under the Hablamos Juntos program to expand the language capacity in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. 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. TeleSalud initially offered three primary services exclusively in Spanish: nurse advice, medical interpretation, and member services.

The TeleSalud Spanish nurse advice program was implemented in several phases. The launch date was earlier than originally planned due to time constraints of the grant, and so was initially staffed by nurse practitioners and physicians. No advertising was done during this phase, as part of what was being monitored was member awareness of information printed on their cards. Phase 2 began in October 2004, with launch of computerized protocols and a fully trained nursing staff. In November the decision was made to open the TeleSalud project beyond the Inland Empire area, to all California members on Jan. 1, 2005. Replicability was begun in March with addition of nurse advice for our Spanish and English speaking members. TeleSalud has now expanded into four states, with two more scheduled to be added by year's end.

#### Preliminary Findings

The most useful component of our early findings is the utilization trend data. In 2002, a review of utilization statistics of Molina's outsourced nurse advice line found that while overall utilization of the service was good, usage of Language Line Services by Spanish-speaking members was very low. We have seen a steady increase in calls from our Spanish speaking members. This is significant because Molina did not begin to market TeleSalud until the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2005. There are some repeat callers, but most callers are becoming aware of TeleSalud through word-of-mouth.

#### **Nurse Advice Line-Language Monthly Totals**



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### **Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Cost benefit analysis is very preliminary. Before the TeleSalud launch, the outsourced nurse advice service was well utilized and English speaking members were familiar with the service. The phone number for nurse advice in English has been widely disseminated, whereas the number for Spanish nurse advice was distributed as a start-up program. The TeleSalud number was placed on member cards in two counties, San Bernardino and Riverside, and on all new member cards after 1/1/05. Given equal dissemination of the numbers, the assumption is that ER cost savings will be the same whether the member speaks English or Spanish. Preliminary cost benefit estimates are therefore made based on data from members identifying English or Spanish as their preferred language.

In January, 35.8% of callers who had originally intended to go to the Emergency department reported that after speaking with a nurse, they were able to have their needs met by going to the physician's office or following the nurse's advice at home. In July, 65% of callers who indicated that they had initially intended to go to the Emergency department were able to receive services at their doctor's office, or take care of their concerns with education and home measures. These statistics were derived from actual follow-up calls made to the member. Using an identified average Emergency department cost, this is predicted to result in a significant cost savings. Molina's interpreter costs have decreased 50 percent.

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations to these findings:

- A relatively small sample size in these early phases makes it difficult to extrapolate initial results to the entire membership.
- The project is expanding very rapidly in its replication phase, but expansion is proceeding at different rates in different states. Advertising has not begun for these services in many of these areas.
- The physician culture is very different in different areas. Many are not accustomed to working with health plans for nurse advice services and are still becoming familiar with TeleSalud services.
- Members in some states have never used nurse advice services, while others are familiar with nurse advice services and more likely to call.
- Due to lag time, it is too early to compare our preliminary data with actual claims data for more detailed analysis.

### **Indirect Benefits**

There are many indirect cost benefits that have been identified with TeleSalud. We have found that gains are multi-faceted, and that TeleSalud has been valuable to other departments in the company.

- Bilingual capacity for nurse advice services is substantially increased. The previous nurse advice vendor had a 0.5 FTE that was bilingual out of 16 FTE RNs. TeleSalud staff is 100% bilingual in Spanish.
- TeleSalud RNs are immediately available 24 hours a day if complex medical interpreting is needed for the member or the physician.
- Follow up calls were not performed by the previous outsourced nurse advice service. For every call that comes into nurse advice services, a follow up call is subsequently made the next day. Through these calls we have been able to identify barriers for our non-English speaking members and network gaps.
- TeleSalud RNs are able to make referrals to disease management services. They are also able to notify case managers if a member has had any problems.

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- TeleSalud RNs are available 24 hours a day to support members for health education services with live answers instead of pre-recorded messages.
- TeleSalud RNs and operators have been instrumental in helping members with language barriers obtain services and make appointments.
- RNs can offer immediate advice and assistance until member can see their physician.

TeleSalud call volume has more than doubled during 2005. Other contributing factors to call center efficiency have helped make TeleSalud a success. TeleSalud has grown into a multi-tasking call center offering many services:

TeleSalud Nurse Advice  
Nurse Advice Services (English)  
Member Appointment Center  
Utilization Management Support after hours  
Member Services Support after hours

Because we serve our own members, we have a greater stake in the outcomes of calls placed to Molina Healthcare Inc. Our commitment led to significant organizational change to enable 24 hour direct access to Spanish speaking registered nurses without having to go through an English queue. Our operators and nurses take pride and satisfaction in providing excellent service to our members, and in meeting our mission.

September 2005