

# LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

## Telehealth in the National Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program

More than 1 in 3 adults in the United States is at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup> The National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) provides a framework for type 2 diabetes prevention efforts that includes an evidence-based lifestyle change program (LCP). However, the program is underused because of a lack of access, despite its proven value and cost effectiveness.<sup>2</sup>

Telehealth holds promise for increasing access to and engaging individuals in National DPP LCP. Telehealth offers people access to affordable health care by using technology such as a computer or smart phone. Technologies used to deliver type 2 diabetes prevention in underserved areas include phones, smartphone apps, computers, texts, and videos. Each can be used, together with live interaction with a trained lifestyle coach, to deliver the National DPP LCP virtually.

HabitNu achieved success using telehealth by streamlining processes to engage and connect participants and create partnerships to increase access to services.

### Delivery of the Program

#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW



#### About HabitNu

HabitNu is a health technology startup company based in Illinois. The organization offers personalized tools for the National DPP LCP to help individuals make small and lasting changes in their eating and physical activity habits. HabitNu piloted its first free in-person and distance learning classes in 2017 in the Chicago area. HabitNu continues to offer the program to people at risk of type 2 diabetes. Program participants are predominantly female and, on average, 61 years of age.

### Telehealth Technology Description

HabitNu uses CDC's PreventT2 curriculum. HabitNu's telehealth technology includes these main components:

- A videoconferencing platform that broadcasts live interactive sessions.
- A cloud-based mobile app that enables participants to upload physical activity data, access educational sources, engage in group discussions, and access lifestyle coach online make-up sessions.
- Software integrations that automatically upload participant data from Bluetooth-enabled activity trackers and scales.

### Telehealth Program Structure

Participants in the program start with an introductory in-person or distance learning session, which helps to reinforce participant commitment and is used to collect baseline information. Participants receive access to the app and a free digital scale. To provide the best participant experience, the program design includes the following:

- Weekly 5-minute curriculum videos in the app to watch before or after live webinar sessions.
- Weekly coach-led webinar sessions for education, peer sharing, and discussion.
- One required in-person session each month where the coach and participants meet.
- An app-based discussion board where participants and coaches can engage with each other.



# LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: HabitNu

## KEY IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENTS



### SPECIALIZED STAFFING

A diverse team of operations and program staff at HabitNu oversee program delivery in the following ways:

- A health systems manager identifies new markets and partnerships.
- A chief growth officer recruits fitness centers, pharmacies, and grocery store chains to offer the LCP.
- A director of program operations trains and supports coaches to deliver the program and track participant data.
- Coaches lead all sessions and send tailored participant communications and reminders via the mobile app.
- A chief software architect works with app developers to refine and add new features to the digital platform.



### TAILORED CURRICULUM AND CONTENT DESIGN

HabitNu tailored the educational experience in the following ways:

- Added 5-minute informational and tutorial videos to explain key concepts. These videos were shown before the coached program sessions.
- Added a cloud-based app to log physical activity and food intake, offer peer support, watch pre-recorded sessions, and participate in live sessions.



### FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION

To encourage enrollment, engagement, and retention, the following features are offered:

- Weekly scheduled times for participants to call in and ask questions.
- Live make-up sessions with the coach, as well as session recordings to ensure no participant is left behind.
- Tailored encouragement and reminder messages sent via the mobile app.
- The option to join the class via phone or Internet.



### DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

HabitNu streamlines data collection, analysis, and reporting by:

- Collecting, organizing, and tracking participant's weight, physical activity, and engagement via the app.
- Training coaches to monitor participant's progress and outcomes, and to make timely, informed decisions about participant's needs.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Program and Participant Coordination**  
Investing in online tools, platforms, and software that automate or streamline program processes such as data collection and communication can reduce the burden on coaches and improve a participant's experience.
- **Program Design**  
Participant engagement and connectedness are key to the success of the National DPP LCP. In-person coach session and peer interaction help to enhance a user's experience.
- **Accessibility and Location**  
A program that includes in-person sessions must have a meeting space centrally located and easily accessible for participants. Partnerships with pharmacies, fitness centers, and other community-based gathering places are also recommended.

Learn More About the National DPP LCP at

HabitNu

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<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2020*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/data/statistics/national-diabetes-statistics-report.pdf>. Accessed March 1, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Diabetes Prevention Program website. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/index.html>. Accessed March 1, 2021.

The systematic screening and assessment method was used to identify and learn about the use of telehealth in the National Diabetes Prevention Program lifestyle change program.