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METROPLUS HEALTH PLAN, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE NYC COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE COALITION, PARTNERS TO CONNECT 80,000 OF PLAN'S MOST AT-RISK MEMBERS TO CRUCIAL HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

New initiative, bringing together Amazon Web Services, Inc. (AWS), consultant Bain & Company (Bain), and non-profit AirNYC, enables MetroPlusHealth's most vulnerable members to access help with COVID-19, food, housing, unemployment insurance, prescriptions, and other issues from the comfort and safety of their homes.

(New York, NY – June 10, 2020) -- MetroPlus Health Plan today announced the successful launch of a new member outreach program, spearheaded by the NYC COVID-19 Rapid Response [Coalition](#) and including [AWS](#), [Bain](#), and [AirNYC](#), to help MetroPlusHealth address the growing health and social service needs of tens of thousands of its most at-risk members. The partnership was designed to establish a rapid interactive digital outreach program connecting vulnerable MetroPlusHealth members with their health plan and social services agencies to provide accelerated access to healthy food, social service supports, and health care.

“Those with the worst health outcomes are often disproportionately affected by disease burden as well as the underlying social determinants of health, like equitable access to food, housing, and health care,” said MetroPlusHealth’s **Deputy Chief Medical Officer Amanda Parsons, M.D.** “As COVID-19 began to hit New York City, it was not surprising to us that vulnerable populations faced the direst health challenges. At MetroPlusHealth, we needed to reach out quickly to our at-risk members to identify their issues and link them up to services that could help.”

Through the NYC COVID-19 Rapid Response Coalition -- a collaboration among health care providers, insurers, social services groups, technology companies, and others created in March to help low-income New Yorkers weather the pandemic -- a partnership between MetroPlusHealth, AWS, Bain, and community-based AirNYC, was formed. Within days, a strategy and solution to reach out to tens of thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers was born, with AWS volunteering to build a chatbot for the health plan, AirNYC offering to handle the social services screening, and Bain helping refine and improve the efficiency of the messaging. Over the first three weeks in April, approximately 54,000 interactive text messages were sent to

MetroPlusHealth members at high risk for poor COVID-19 outcomes. Of the 9% of recipients who engaged with the chatbot, 55% confirmed they needed help and more than half of those were connected to a variety of services, including COVID-19 guidance, emotional support, pharmacy refills, virtual provider visits, food resources, housing security, unemployment assistance, and more.

“This collaborative profoundly reflects the mission of the Coalition,” said Trevor Price of the NYC COVID-19 Rapid Response Coalition. “Our aim has been to bring partners together, helping them scale and grow, and ultimately apply innovative approaches to help keep vulnerable New Yorkers healthy and safe at home during the COVID-19 crisis. This initiative was in response to COVID, but some of its solutions will last even once the virus is gone.”

“I was at my lowest,” said **MetroPlusHealth member Lenora Y**, a survivor of domestic abuse, currently residing in a homeless shelter with her two adult sons, and a recipient of the chatbot. “So down and out, emotionally. I’d lost hope. When I saw that text from MetroPlusHealth, it was amazing. Someone *does* care. Someone *is* reaching out. They are concerned about *me*... So, I sucked up my tears and reached back out to them for help. Now, I am working with one of their housing specialists to see if they can find my boys and me a new home.”

“I always volunteered at my church’s food pantry,” said **MetroPlusHealth member John C**. His asthma and other health issues caused him to stop working once COVID-19 required him to shelter in place at home. “But now I couldn’t afford my own food and the lines at food pantries were so long, I wasn’t sure what to do. Had to ask my neighbors to lend me something to eat.” Then John received the text from his health plan. “They set up food deliveries for me from a pantry in just a few days and will support me until this crisis is over. I didn’t know help getting food was available for someone like me.”

“My situation was really, really bad,” said **MetroPlusHealth member Survia R.**, expecting her first child in July. “I’m a driver but I needed to stop because I couldn’t risk my baby’s health” during this pandemic. “When I got the text from MetroPlusHealth, I was surprised, very pleasantly. I think MetroPlusHealth really stepped it up.” Survia was quickly connected to food deliveries, and reminded that, through her MetroPlusHealth member rewards program, she could even receive free baby supplies. Her advice? “If you get a text from MetroPlusHealth, answer it. Respond. There is a lot of help they can connect you to.”

At the end of April, MetroPlusHealth, under the direction of **President and CEO Dr. Talya Schwartz**, took over the program. “Now we are running the program and have reached an additional 26,000 members, totaling 80,000 New Yorkers touched, to date,” said Dr. Schwartz. “We are excited by the results of this initiative and thankful to our partners who helped set us up in record time. We plan on conducting this critical member outreach throughout the COVID-19 crisis - and beyond.”

The MetroPlusHealth/AWS partnership has been spotlighted by Amazon in several ways. CEO Jeff Bezos recently highlighted the work in his annual [shareholder letter](#) and Amazon’s [industries blog](#) published the code it created for this project, enabling others to utilize chatbots to access people who may be difficult to reach through more traditional methods.

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About MetroPlusHealth

Since 1985, MetroPlus Health Plan has built a reputation for providing access to affordable, quality health care to residents across New York City. A wholly-owned subsidiary of NYC Health + Hospitals, the nation's largest public health system, MetroPlusHealth is the plan of choice for over half a million New Yorkers and has a five-star rating based on the State's 2018 Consumer's Guide to Medicaid and Child Health Plus Managed Care Plans in New York City. The health plan's robust network of primary care doctors and specialists includes many independent community providers. Culturally sensitive, and fluent in more than 40 languages, MetroPlusHealth's staff is as diverse as the great city it serves. For more information about MetroPlusHealth plans, benefits, and services, visit www.metroplus.org and join the conversation at facebook.com/metroplushealth and [twitter @metroplushealth](https://twitter.com/metroplushealth).