



How NYC's MetroPlus Health Plan Used Multichannel Marketing to Drive Telehealth Adoption During the COVID-19 Pandemic

MetroPlus Health Plan, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NYC Health + Hospitals, provides a wide selection of health insurance options to the people of New York City. The health plan currently serves more than 550,000 members, 72% of whom are covered through its Medicaid line of business.

In March 2020, COVID-19 began to spread across the United States, and New York City soon emerged as the epicenter. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, MetroPlusHealth partnered with Amwell to offer its entire member base access to virtual visits. In the short term, MetroPlusHealth hoped telehealth would provide immediate care as members self-quarantined and remained socially distant, while in the long term telehealth would continue to improve affordable access to physicians, psychologists, and counselors in the city.

"In the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, it was more critical than ever to help New Yorkers reach a medical professional while still practicing social distancing," says Talya Schwartz, MD, president and chief executive officer of MetroPlusHealth

MetroPlusHealth Membership Breakdown

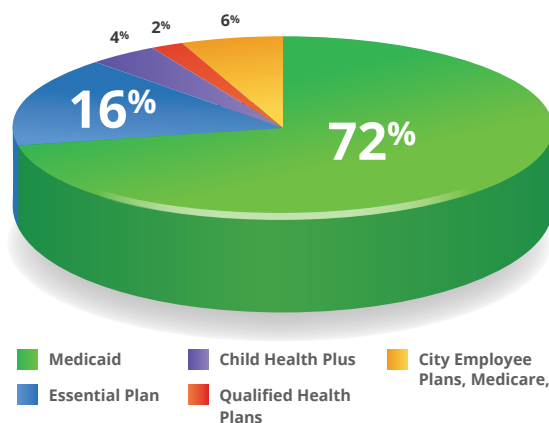
Managed Medicaid: MetroPlusHealth's health plan for those who are eligible for Medicaid. Child Health Plus: Health insurance for all children under age 19 who live in New York City but do not qualify for Medicaid.

Essential Plan: Low-cost health insurance for those who do not qualify for Medicaid or the MetroPlus Child Health Plus plan.

Qualified Health Plans: Insurance through the NY State of Health (NYSOH) marketplace.

City Employee Plan: Health insurance plan exclusively for New York City employees.

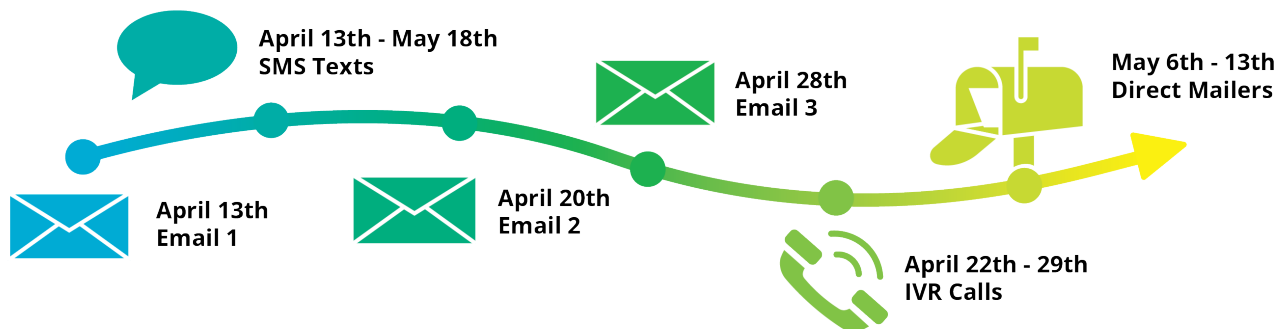
Medicare: For those who are Medicare-eligible and live in New York City.



MetroPlusHealth launched the telehealth service in late March, and quickly developed an engagement strategy to make members aware of the new service.

A Multichannel Approach to Member Engagement

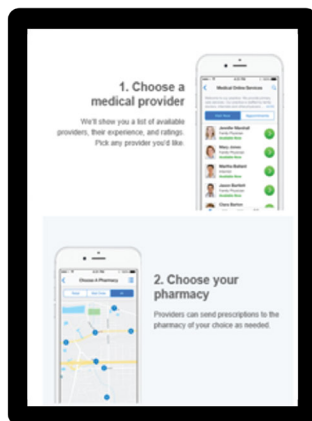
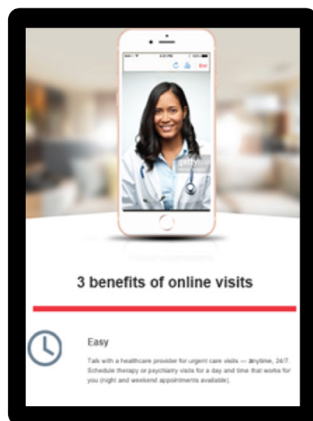
To engage its large population during the COVID-19 crisis, MetroPlusHealth worked with Amwell on a multichannel approach that included emails, a direct mailer, interactive voice response (IVR) calls, and short message service (SMS) texts. The strategy was to reach and activate as many members as possible in whichever way best resonated with them.



Email & Direct Mail

In April 2020, Amwell's Engagement Services team began an email and direct mailer campaign on behalf of MetroPlusHealth to help enroll members in telehealth and encourage utilization. The campaign consisted of three emails and one direct mailer.

METROPLUSHEALTH EMAILS



METROPLUSHEALTH DIRECT MAILER



Both the emails and direct mailer emphasized that MetroPlus Virtual Visits were free — a critical selling point for the health plan's cost-conscious members. Other key messages communicated in the emails and direct mailer included:

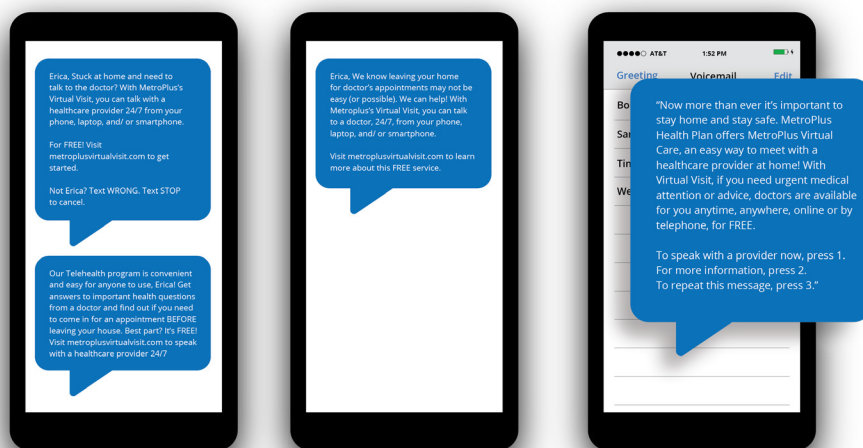
- Step-by-step instructions for how to use telehealth
- Answers to the top questions asked about online visits
- 24/7 access to board-certified doctors
- Availability of online prescriptions
- Key conditions appropriate for virtual care

IVR Calls and SMS Texts

Another part of MetroPlusHealth's multichannel marketing approach included the use of IVR calls and SMS texts. To best engage its members, MetroPlusHealth determined that those with a mobile phone would receive text messages, while those with a landline would receive the IVR calls.

"Reaching out to mobile numbers via SMS typically carries the most impact because members are much more likely to engage via text," says Kathryn Soman, director of corporate communications at MetroPlusHealth. "However, we would have never been able to reach this population of landlines if we only used SMS. We strongly believe that using a multimodal method of communication is the best strategy to reach the maximum number of members."

METROPLUSHEALTH SMS MESSAGING



For SMS, MetroPlusHealth first sent a generic welcome message to the member (or the member's guardian), informing them that they would soon receive messages about their health benefits. Members had the option to opt out of texts at any time.

For the IVR calls, MetroPlusHealth developed direct messaging that first verifies the member before providing clear communication around telehealth features and benefits. Depending on actions taken by the member, the IVR script covers everything from a greeting message and member verification to a call to action and, if selected by the member, a transfer to a virtual visit.

"There is no build up to our messaging. We make it clear what the member can get out of this engagement and tell them exactly how they can do it," says Soman. "This allows us to close gaps in care while achieving business objectives."

METROPLUSHEALTH'S IVR & SMS CAMPAIGN BEST PRACTICES

When developing a script, MetroPlusHealth asked:	Content best practices:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the goal?2. What services need to be highlighted?3. How can we remove barriers to entry?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The shorter the better2. Minimize barriers to engagement3. Mitigate risk through member verification

Results: Strong Initial Engagement During COVID-19

Through this multichannel engagement strategy, MetroPlusHealth successfully engaged its members in the telehealth benefit. Through the direct mailer alone, the health plan enrolled more than 2,500 members in virtual care—52% of whom were Medicaid members. The email campaign drove an additional 300 registrations.

MetroPlusHealth's SMS text messages were received by more than 216,000 members, and nearly 30,000 members received an IVR call. The health plan saw an extremely high click-through rate of 27% for SMS, well above the industry average of 6%.¹ Overall, the SMS text campaign resulted in more than 3,340 virtual visit enrollments, while IVR calls drove 78 additional enrollments.

Overall, MetroPlusHealth engaged nearly 7,000 members in telehealth in less than three months, with almost half of those members going on to have a virtual visit. Of those who had a virtual visit, 41% were insured by MetroPlusHealth's Medicaid plan. While urgent care drove most of the visits—likely due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis—members also used the benefit for both therapy and psychiatry visits.

NOTABLE NUMBERS: A SNAPSHOT OF **METROPLUSHEALTH'S** ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

7K TELEHEALTH
ENROLLMENTS
IN 3 MONTHS

48% OF ENROLLED
MEMBERS HAVE HAD
A VIRTUAL VISIT

27% CLICK-THROUGH
RATE FOR
SMS TEXTS

MetroPlusHealth launched its virtual care program in the epicenter of a pandemic. The importance of providing its members—many of whom are Medicaid members—with access to immediate, affordable care during a public health crisis cannot be understated. The health plan's use of a multichannel campaign proved effective, especially for its Medicaid population, which is a population known to be hard to engage in healthcare benefits.

1: Tatango, The Average SMS Marketing Click-Through Rate, 2020.