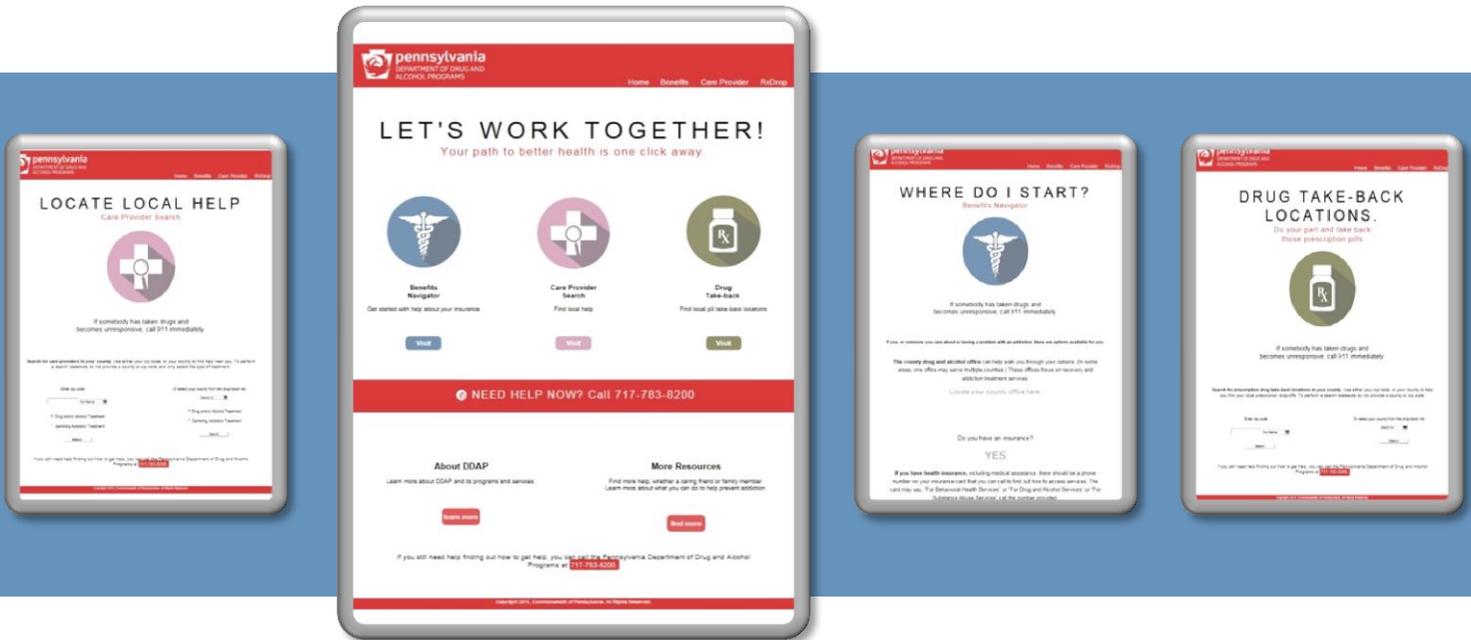


Get Help Now Mobile Website A MobilePA Challenge Project

Category: Cross-Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships
State: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Project Initiation: September 2014
Project Completion: December 2014



Partnership Organizations:

- Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC)
- Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)
- Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH)
- Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Administration (OA)

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Executive Summary

The MobilePA Challenge is a collaborative program that pairs state agencies with students and faculty from Pennsylvania colleges and universities to collaborate on mobile technology projects.

Unlike a typical hackathon that takes place over a short span of time such as a weekend, the MobilePA Challenge lasts for several weeks or an entire semester. Students are expected to present fresh ideas and develop prototypes of mobile applications which address the business requirements of the agency. At the end of the semester, students present their final projects to a panel of distinguished representatives and share their work products with the agency to use as it desires.

In 2014, six state agencies collaborated with three different universities on seven projects, providing a variety of benefits for stakeholders including:

- **Better Public Access to Information**
- **Improved Interagency Collaboration**
- **Fresh Ideas for Government**
- **Cost Savings**
- **Promotion of Mobile IT Solutions**
- **Student Engagement and Potential Recruitment**
- **Support for Governor's Policy Priorities**

During the fall 2014 semester, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) partnered with a student team from Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) to develop a mobile-enabled website to improve access to information about addiction and recovery resources. The project team received additional IT support from the PA Department of Health (DOH). With its public launch in the spring, the *Get Help Now* mobile-enabled website is the first student project to result in a new citizen service.

The project was initiated with the goal that “All Pennsylvanians with a smart phone or mobile device will be able to easily access, locate, and engage with Pennsylvania drug and alcohol, and/or gambling addiction treatment care and other service offerings.” The final project result was an elegant, yet robust, mobile-enabled website with new features, including interactive resources and information based on geolocation.

The [Get Help Now mobile-enabled website](#) has the potential to help an estimated 900,000 Pennsylvanians suffering from substance abuse and addiction disorders, while also empowering loved ones and treatment professionals. This website may also serve as a model for other Pennsylvania public services, and has the potential to become an industry standard for the promotion of drug and alcohol treatment services at the federal, state, and local levels.

Business Problem and Solution

One in four families struggle with a loved one's addiction and, far too often, they feel helpless and are unsure of where to turn.

- Secretary Gary Tennis, PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

Business Problem

The PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) has a mission to engage, coordinate, and lead Pennsylvania's efforts to prevent and reduce drug, alcohol, and gambling addiction and abuse; and to promote recovery, thereby reducing the human and economic impact of the disease.

DDAP leadership is seeking new and innovative ways to use technology and communication strategies to help improve citizens' awareness and access to substance abuse treatment. With one in four families struggling with a loved one's substance abuse, the agency is looking to find ways to empower citizens to get the help they need.

The agency is proactively enhancing the state's current substance abuse service system. There is a wealth of resources dedicated to helping Pennsylvanians find substance abuse treatment and support services. However, the information was not easy to discover, and the agency repeatedly heard from recovering addicts (and their families and friends) that they wished they had known about these public health services before or during a crisis point.

DDAP leadership set out to find new ways to promote their services and make it easier for citizens to connect with the right information as quickly as possible. The agency determined that creating an easy-to-use mobile-friendly solution for DDAP's *Get Help Now* services would be the ideal way to help citizens quickly locate drug and alcohol treatment providers and support services.

Technology Solution

MobilePA Challenge – Initiating the Partnership: Since mobile technologies are still relatively new in state government, the *MobilePA Challenge* program is designed to help introduce state agencies to new technologies, development approaches, and ideas. In turn, students are exposed to state government as a potential employer, as well as getting the opportunity to build their resumes, apply their skills to real-world problems, and gain valuable work experience in project management, client engagement, IT policy, and communications.

Assembling the Project Team: During the summer of 2014 the Governor's Office of Administration (OA) announced that it was accepting mobile project proposals for the *MobilePA Challenge* program. OA then matched the project proposals with students

and faculty at Pennsylvania’s colleges and universities. Through a no-cost licensing agreement with each college or university and OA, the student teams shared their work products with state government to use or modify as it desires.

DDAP’s project proposal was accepted by OA, shared with multiple potential student teams and was selected by three students in an independent study program at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC). The students were asked to prepare a mobile solution to help highlight DDAP’s *Get Help Now* services. The PA Department of Health (DOH) provided IT support to ensure that the student work would be compatible with existing technology used by DDAP, and OA provided program coordination through the *MobilePA Challenge* to ensure that all requirements were met.

Partner	Role	Responsibilities
PA Governor’s Office of Administration (OA)	Program Coordinator	Administer the <i>MobilePA Challenge</i> program; work with state agencies to ensure the launch of the service
PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)	Business Owner & Project Manager	Mentor and guide student team; convene partners within state government to support project; arrange regular meetings and coordinate communication between all partners
PA Department of Health (DOH)	IT Support	Back-end integration; security checks; and compatibility with existing systems
Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC)	Student Team	Document requirements; design and develop a technology solution in close collaboration with DDAP

Developing the Solution: The project was initiated with the goal that, “All Pennsylvanians with a smart phone or mobile device will be able to easily access, locate, and engage with Pennsylvania drug and alcohol, and/or gambling addiction treatment care and other service offerings.”

The objectives and deliverables included:

- Create a mobile web starting point for those in need of recovery
- Provide current interactive resources and information based on visitor’s geographic location
- Design a user interface that is fast, elegant, easy to use (no barriers)
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality of visitors (needing no upfront personal information)
- Reflect state government integrity through the PA brand
- Ability for DDAP staff to update resources and information on the site

Project Results: In close collaboration with DDAP, the HACC students evaluated the options of producing either a native mobile application or a mobile-enabled website. Through its review, the team determined that a mobile-enabled website would best serve DDAP’s needs by providing the highest level of accessibility regardless of the kind

of device used, while also preserving the privacy of visitors by not requiring the download of a native mobile application or other software. Creating everything from the content and graphics to the back-end code, the students prepared a user-friendly mobile-enabled site for DDAP.

At the end of the semester, the students turned over their project materials to DDAP and OA. The beta version of the site was about 80 percent complete. DDAP, DOH and OA worked together to ensure that the service provider database was properly geo-coded and made a few minor edits prior to the site's official launch. (The *Get Help Now* website can be found at www.ddap.pa.gov/GetHelpNow.)

Coordinated Communications: DDAP partnered with HACC and OA to conduct joint outreach to the media and the public about the new site and the innovative partnership. DDAP also coordinated with its network of county-level drug and alcohol program offices, and local-level treatment service providers in order to help spread the word about the new site and features.

Significance to Improvement of the Operation of Government

The *MobilePA Challenge* sets new standards for collaboration and creative problem-solving in state government. This project resulted in a variety of benefits for citizen and government stakeholders.

Citizen Benefits

Better Public Access to Information: For citizens, the new *Get Help Now* mobile-enabled site offers many enhancements to the previous information available on DDAP's original website. With the new mapping feature for mobile devices, direct contact options via phone and driving directions, clear guidance to help citizens understand treatment options available through health insurance providers and county drug and alcohol programs, and information on gambling addiction treatment and prescription drop-off locations, the new tool provides functionalities that meet the needs of the target audience.

Government Agency Benefits

Improved Interagency Collaboration: This project provided an opportunity for three state government agencies to work together to lend support to the mobile site in order to reach the final launch. This kind of cooperation across agencies and disciplines offers many benefits and lays the foundation for future joint efforts.

Fresh Ideas for Government: For traditional IT projects, state government typically turns to either in-house resources or contractors. The *MobilePA Challenge* program allowed DDAP to pursue a different direction through its engagement with students who brought new perspectives to technology development and solutions.

Cost Savings: This program also establishes an innovative model through which the state can help address problems at no-cost beyond staff time and commitment.

Policy Alignment

Promotion of Mobile IT Solutions: In line with the state's IT strategic plan and NASCIO's 2014 state CIO priorities, this project is an example of state government taking a mobile-first approach to improve services.

Student Engagement and Potential Recruitment: The *MobilePA Challenge* program is a way to showcase state government as a potential employer to the next generation of IT professionals and leaders. This is especially true for students who participate in the program because of an interest in public service. At a time when state governments across the country are experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining IT talent, this is a great outreach tool to tap into a pool of potential future employees.

Support for Governor's Policy Priorities: The Wolf Administration has established a vision for Pennsylvania based on "Jobs that Pay, Schools that Teach, and Government that Works." The *MobilePA Challenge* program ties into all three priorities by working with higher education institutions to provide students with hands-on work experience (Schools that Teach), while also offering students a chance to build resumes that will be attractive to future employers (Jobs that Pay). This also results in the development of products that enable government to streamline operations and improve service delivery (Government that Works).

Benefits of the Project

From a broad perspective, helping citizens find substance abuse treatment services has a profound impact on society. Prevention, intervention, and treatment services can help increase the safety and security of communities, improve health of individuals and families, increase employment, and improve overall social functioning.

Below, a few key statistics are provided to give a sense of the benefits of helping citizens gain access to addiction treatment services.

Benefits of Helping Pennsylvania Citizens Access Treatment

Magnitude of Addiction and Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania: Over the last two decades, addiction and overdose rates have been steadily rising in Pennsylvania. It is estimated that of a population of almost 13 million, some 900,000 suffer from substance abuse disorders. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association)

According to the latest figures available, the overdose death rate in Pennsylvania has risen from 2.7 deaths per thousand to 15.4 deaths per thousand. That means nearly 2,000 men, women, and children are dying annually in Pennsylvania due to drug overdose. Treatment needs can be seen across a range of special populations,

including criminal offenders, veterans, pregnant women and adolescents. (2014-2015 DDAP State Plan)

Criminal Justice: In Pennsylvania, nearly 36,000 offenders (70 percent) in the state criminal justice system need drug and alcohol treatment. This does not include the untold number in the county criminal justice system also in need.

Veterans: Over 109,000 veterans (11 percent) have a substance abuse problem needing treatment.

Pregnant Women: More than 7,100 pregnant women (5 percent) struggle with an alcohol or drug problem.

Adolescents: An estimated 68,000 children aged 12-17 have abused drugs or alcohol in the past year.

- Excerpt from 2014-2015 DDAP State Plan (page 9)

Taxpayer Benefits of Treatment vs. Incarceration: Directing people to rehabilitation services instead of prison is beneficial and cost-efficient. For every \$1 that is spent on treatment, it saves taxpayers \$7, mostly in reduced criminal justice costs. (Rand Drug Policy Research Center) It also saves an additional \$4 in costs from HIV and Hepatitis C medical care. Substance abuse treatment dramatically reduces recidivism rates for those incarcerated, and leads to increased employment rates at higher rates of pay. (Villanova University, 1995)

Leveraging IT Solution for Other Government Services

Beyond Drug and Alcohol Programs: Through the *MobilePA Challenge* program, state has a no-cost licensing agreement which enables it to use or modify the work produced by the student team. The simplicity and elegance of the mobile-enabled website produced by the students could easily be adapted for use by other agencies that also wish to promote their public services.

Potential National Model

Promoting Treatment Services Nationwide: The challenge of helping citizens to access substance abuse treatment resources is not limited to Pennsylvania – it is a problem faced by governments across the United States. In comparison to the promotion mechanisms used by other states, Pennsylvania’s new *Get Help Now* site is considered an industry innovation. It has the potential to be replicated at the federal, state, and local levels across the country.