

Department Name

California Public Employees' Retirement System

Project Name

Health Demographic Profile Project

Category

Digital Services: Government to Citizen

Implementation date: January 1, 2023

Colin Steiner

Enterprise Communications and Media,
Office of Public Affairs

colin.steiner@calpers.ca.gov

916-795-3274

Executive Summary

Idea

Eliminating health disparities through data

CalPERS is the largest purchaser of public employee health benefits in California and the second largest purchaser in the nation after the federal government. The total number of covered health members is over 1.5 million, with a total spend in excess of \$10 billion per year.

Existing research data shows racial minorities are disproportionately affected by most major chronic health conditions, like asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and a variety of genetic and other birth defects.ⁱ “Health disparities make it difficult for people in certain populations to receive the care that they need and deserve,” says CalPERS’ Chief Clinical Director Dr. Julia Logan. “Over time, this leads to poor health outcomes, such as higher rates of chronic disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancers.”ⁱⁱ With so many members from various demographic backgrounds, CalPERS needed to quantify the quality of care our members are provided to know where disparities exist, to develop interventions based on where the data shows it’s needed.

CalPERS developed and deployed an app to allow enrolled health members to safely and securely self-report directly to CalPERS their race, ethnicity, and preferred language (REaL), as well as sexual orientation, and gender identity (SOGI). This REaL-SOGI data became known as the Health Demographic Profile (HDP) and is vital to helping CalPERS learn about each of our health members and use the information to work together with our health plan partners to reveal trends and potential inequities in how we provide access to care and treatment options.

Implementation

Standardizing REaL SOGI data

Execution of this project was led by members of the Health Policy and Benefits Branch (HPBB), specifically the Clinical Policy and Programs Division under Dr. Logan, and the Health Plan Research and Administration Division under Rob Jarzombek, with support from Information Technology Services Branch (ITSB), Office of Public Affairs (PAOF), and Human Resources Division (HRSD), to ensure an enterprise-wide perspective and oversight on the overall project. For the HDP data to be considered statistically significant, the project needed about 5% (75,000) of our health enrolled membership to respond. The HPBB leadership set their success goal at 100,000 HDP records by January 1, 2023.

Implementation came in phases, in order to scale the functionality and incorporate necessary change controls. The initial implementation allowed health members to submit their HDP data through our online member account portal, myCalPERS, following an account login. A subsequent implementation broadened the rules and accessibility, allowing most health members, including any dependents over age 18, to submit their HDP data through a ‘Guest portal’ on our public facing website, www.calpers.ca.gov, with limited identifiable information. CalPERS also worked with our health plan partners to communicate the HDP data standards and construct a weekly data file sharing agreement. The HDP standards were developed with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) own health equity goals in mind.ⁱⁱⁱ CalPERS used the CMS’ defined race and ethnicity options in preparation for this data being required for Medicare enrollments beginning January 1, 2023.

Impact

Two minutes for a better health future

Nearly all of CalPERS 1.5 million health members will benefit from the HDP project in some way. Whether it's the ease in which our members can submit their HDP data with or without a myCalPERS account, or that the data will help CalPERS and our health plan partners work to identify and eliminate health disparities and improve overall health outcomes for our members, the HDP project will have a lasting impact on our health benefits program.



Idea

What problem does it solve?

According to a 2020 report by US News and World Report, California is the most diverse state in the union, with the highest linguistic diversity and a top five ranking in three additional categories: socioeconomic diversity, household diversity and cultural diversity.^{iv} In 2021, CalPERS developed a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) framework, through which we actively engaged with initiatives to increase the integration of DEI into all aspects of our organization to closely align with our mission, vision, and values.

One of the priority areas was Health Equity, with the objective to ensure all health members can attain the highest level of health possible, regardless of background. To strengthen our commitment to health equity, CalPERS instituted health equity health plan requirements for 2022 that include race and ethnicity reporting requirements, National Multicultural Health Standards and Certification requirements, and frequent communication and collaboration with health plans.

At the directive of our HPBB leadership, ITSBB was tasked with defining a scalable solution to gather and store member HDP data. Considering the sensitive nature of the data being requested, ITSBB proposed a cloud-based app integrated with our existing, legacy framework that would allow the data to be saved and stored in real-time, securely within our current database, and easily accessible to share with our health plans via secure file sharing.



Implementation

Who was involved and how did you do it?

Due to the large scope and the need for appropriate member communication and ample time for our health plan partners to make their own changes to consume the HDP data, we implemented in phases:

- The first phase's soft launch went live in 2021, allowing health enrolled members (account owners) to submit their HDP data online through myCalPERS and saving in our database.



- Phase 2 focused on gathering as many HDP records as possible. This effort expanded the population eligible to provide the HDP data, introduced the Guest portal concept for easier accessibility, and provided an incentive (a \$10 Target® gift card) for each new HDP profile created during the initial 6-week post-implementation timeframe. This phase went live in late September 2022.
- The third phase went live in January 2023 and established the file sharing interface agreement with our health plan partners. On a weekly basis, CalPERS created a file containing all new or updated HDP records for each health plan and shared with the health plan partners via sFTP. The files currently serve dual purpose as they provide the necessary HDP data for the CalPERS Health Equity initiative, but also allow the health plans to comply with CMS' Medicare enrollment requirements for REaL data.

The success of this project is a direct result of our sophisticated ITSB, who HPBB partnered with to design and implement a solution that adds business value and delivers focused results. With a small, agile team, ITSB was able to quickly build out a prototype cloud-based app and prove it could be integrated with our legacy myCalPERS system. Over the course of the project, ITSB introduced new functionality that would be adopted as repeatable patterns; within myCalPERS: a banner ad to promote HDP, embedding a YouTube video to inform members the benefits of providing HDP data; within the CalPERS public website: the Guest portal that launched with limited member information.

To ensure our health members and internal employees were adequately prepared for the new functionality, HPBB executed an extensive communication strategy in collaboration with PAOF, which included consistent communication to members through website updates, newsletter articles, social media platforms, and emails. PAOF's video team created a nearly two-minute video describing the benefits of providing HDP data and made it available on all CalPERS' channels. Our Call Center was provided FAQs and an internal webpage to help answer member calls on the HDP profile and the limited-time incentive program following the second phase. Our health plan partners were also communicated on their role in collecting the HDP data and their responsibilities for the limited-time incentive program.



Impact

Benefits and any supporting data.

The key benefits of this change for our 1.5 million members are:

- 24/7 online access to HDP profile –health enrolled members can go online any time to provide or update their HDP profile in just a few clicks. (Including the Guest portal requiring limited identifiable information)
- Acknowledgement that the HDP data was stored confidentially and securely and would only be used by CalPERS and our health plan partners in the administration of the CalPERS' duties under the Public Employees' Medical and Hospital Care Act (PEMHCA).
- Clear communication for why the HDP data was necessary and how it would benefit all.



The key benefits of this change for our internal employees:

- Flexible architecture allows for quick app updates and/or content revisions with minimal to no downtime.
- HPBB was able to create a Health Equity team to work with the enterprise's DEI team on analyzing the collected data to accomplish their goals of identifying health disparities.
- Accessible, real-time data reports allowed team members to see the quantity and quality of the HDP submissions and work with PAOF to communicate to targeted populations, as necessary.
- Integration of the HDP data with existing data warehouse vendor to incorporate with the claims analysis process.

Key benefits for our health plan partners are:

- Clear, standardized data formats and process guides mirroring already established file sharing interface agreements.
- Fresh, timely HDP data provided on a weekly basis.
- HDP data already meets CMS' Medicare enrollment requirements. This will allow for seamless transition to add the REaL data to the daily HIPAA ANSI 834 Enrollment File as we'll use the same data values.

Following the implementation of phase 1, the HDP submissions slowly trickled in, totaling just over 60,000 HDP profiles, well below HPBB's expectations.

Since the implementation of phase 2, and the inclusion of the gift card incentive, HDP submissions have soared. In the first week alone, we received nearly 50,000 new HDP profiles, reaching the goal of 100,000 total HDP profiles just 4 days post-launch. With the added communications, the HDP profiles have continued to be populated, helping us get to just under 198,000 total HDP profiles, as of April 2023.

Phase 3 brought in our health plan partners who can now use the HDP data to not only help CalPERS achieve our goals but also allow the plans to demonstrate their own commitment to health equity.

ⁱ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3794652/

ⁱⁱ calpersgov.sharepoint.com/PAOF/Pages/Have-You-Completed-Your-Health-Demographic-Profile-Yet.aspx

ⁱⁱⁱ oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/OEI-02-21-00100.pdf

^{iv} www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2020-09-10/california-is-the-most-diverse-state-in-the-us

Screenshots

Outreach

Public website informational page (with video and link to Guest portal in app)

The screenshot shows a public website page titled "Health Demographic Profile". The page includes a navigation bar with "Home", "Active Members", "Retiree", and "Employers" tabs, and a "myCalPERS Log In" button. The main content area features a heading "Health Demographic Profile" and a sub-heading "Help us serve you better by completing your health demographic profile. It only takes two minutes." Below this is a "Complete Your Profile" button. A video player is embedded on the page, showing a woman speaking. The video title is "Tell us about yourself" and the video content lists "Race", "Ethnicity", "Preferred Language", "Sexual Orientation", and "Gender Identity". The page also includes a section titled "Your Information is Confidential and Secure" with a brief explanation of data privacy.

Health Demographic Profile YouTube video Gift card FAQs

The screenshot shows the CalPERS PERSPECTIVE website. The page is titled "Health Demographic Profile" and features a large heading "Health Equity Starts With You— Take 5 Minutes to Help". Below the heading is a video player showing a woman speaking. The video title is "Tell us about yourself" and the video content lists "Race", "Ethnicity", "Preferred Language", "Sexual Orientation", and "Gender Identity". The page also includes a section titled "Your Information is Confidential and Secure" with a brief explanation of data privacy. The website has a navigation bar with "Home", "Retirement Benefits", "Health Benefits", "Investments", and "Needs & Costs" tabs, and a search bar.

App's Guest portal page (no account login required)

The screenshot shows the app's guest portal page for the Health Demographic Profile. The page has a navigation bar with "Home", "Retirement", "Health", "Statements", and "Education" tabs, and a "myCalPERS" logo. The main content area features a heading "Health Demographic Profile" and a sub-heading "Health Equity Starts With You". Below this is a video player showing a woman speaking. The video title is "Tell us about yourself" and the video content lists "Race", "Ethnicity", "Preferred Language", "Sexual Orientation", and "Gender Identity". The page also includes a section titled "Your Information is Confidential and Secure" with a brief explanation of data privacy. At the bottom of the page is a "Complete Your Health Demographic Profile" button.

The screenshot shows the CalPERS website "About You" page. The page has a heading "About You" and a sub-heading "Thank you for agreeing to complete your health demographic profile. This survey should only take two minutes to complete. Your response will help us improve quality of care and health resources for all members." Below this is a "Get Started" button. The page also includes a section titled "Date of Birth (required)" with a text input field and a "Continue" button. At the bottom of the page is a "Copyright 2023 CalPERS" notice.

Screenshots

Functionality

HDP App survey (upon clicking the Complete your HDP button)

The screenshot shows the 'Health Demographics' survey form. It includes sections for 'Race & Ethnicity', 'Language(s)', and 'Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation'. Each section contains a list of radio button options for users to select their identity. The 'Race & Ethnicity' section includes options like 'White', 'Hispanic or Latino', 'Black or African American', etc. The 'Language(s)' section asks for the most comfortable language for speaking and reading. The 'Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation' section asks for birth-assigned sex, current gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Internal Page (allows Call Center agents and other Internal team member ability to check on HDP submission(s))

The screenshot shows an internal dashboard for tracking HDP submissions. It features a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'Participate', 'Business Partner', etc. The main content area displays 'Health Demographic Profile' for a specific member, showing completion status, last updated date, and a list of questions. The questions include 'Race & Ethnicity', 'Language(s)', and 'Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation'.

myCalPERS Banner ad (displays for health enrolled members who have not provided HDP data)

The banner ad features a row of five diverse individuals' faces. To the right, the text reads 'Help Us Serve You Better' and 'Complete your health demographic profile. It takes less than 2 minutes to complete. Your information is confidential and will help improve quality of care and health outcomes for all members.' Below the text are two buttons: 'Go to Health Demographic Profile' and 'Close'.

HDP App survey Thank You page

The screenshot shows a 'Thank You' page with the CalPERS logo at the top. The text reads: 'Your responses will help us improve member access to equitable health care. You can now close the window.' At the bottom, there is a footer with copyright information: '© Copyright 2023 CALPERS | CALPERS Website | myCALPERS'.