TENNCARE CONNECT: DIGITAL ADOPTION & MODERNIZATION

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TennCare Connect: Revolutionizing Access to Healthcare

In 2018 the Division of TennCare made the essential choice to transform the process in which members of the state's Medicaid and CHIP programs received assistance. TennCare introduced TennCare Connect, a self-service web portal that modernized the acquisition and maintenance of medical assistance for applicants, members, and partners. The new portal streamlined complex application and renewal processes and ushered a new wave of digital presence for TennCare.

The initial launch of TennCare Connect consisted of self-service portals for members and partners, respectively, and a mobile application which streamlined the customer experience while increasing communication between Tennesseans and the State Government. These platforms provided users a convenient way to access their benefits information, report case changes, view notices, submit documentation, and more. This multi-channel approach allowed TennCare to expand the accessibility of its programs to those who previously faced barriers to applying for and managing their coverage.
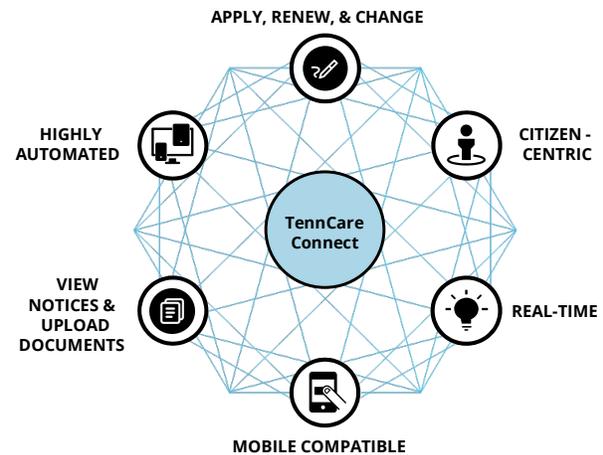

Figure 1. TennCare Connect Key Features

The successful launch of the suite of TennCare Connect products ushered over 1.3 million members into a digital era, allowing TennCare to provide Tennesseans greater access to care. By taking a digital-first approach, TennCare greatly reduced the complexity of the application, change, and renewal processes. Streamlined user access to efficient self-service portals increased the accuracy of reported information and subsequent eligibility decisions so TennCare recipients receive the right coverage when they need it most.

Innovation Through Portal Modernization

In 2021, TennCare launched **TennCare Connect 2.0**, an improved, cloud-hosted, mobile-first, self-service portal for members to access and manage their benefits. TennCare also modernized its **TennCare Access** portal, where Hospitals, Departments of Health, Nursing Facilities, and other Partners across the state can assist Tennesseans in applying for coverage or reporting changes. Launched using cloud services, the upgrade served a collective vision of enhancing both portals while adding additional self-service capabilities. Today the member-facing portal provides **24/7 service to 640K+ registered users** who can manage their coverage information at any time, across any device.

Elevating Customer Focused Governance

- Focal point for completing applications, changes and renewal
- Review and track coverage information, and access to appeal details
- Ability to request for a heath plan change request through the same account
- Easy access to electronic notices, documentation upload, and managing communication preferences
- Reduced worker intervention, with a streamlined eligibility determination within 3 business days

Figure 2. Elevating Customer Focused Governance

To further optimize the user experience, the new portals provide applicants a range of functionalities, such as:

- The ability to create and manage their accounts through TennCare's well-integrated identity and access management flows.
- Provision to apply for coverage, report changes and renew coverage through a streamlined and user-friendly application flow.
- The ability to review coverage status, prompted by dynamic nudges for critical case-related actions, such as renewing their benefits, uploading essential case-related documentation, and viewing letters online.
- Integration with a live-chat agent allowing members to receive faster request intakes and processing of critical case actions for address and phone number updates via their online accounts.

TennCare intentionally designed responsive, cloud-based portals with a revitalized look and feel. The system was designed to serve the user base with a scalable human-centric design, optimized user experience, and improved application workflow. The portals underwent a user interface (UI) / user experience (UX) refresh with added features that offer members easier access to the portal and a streamlined application process. These updates helped to decrease application processing time, reducing the time TennCare case workers spent on monotonous tasks so they can devote their time and energy to complex work requiring manual review.

The **TennCare Connect** portal also introduced a revamped homepage that includes configurable banner alert messages for critical announcements. The enhanced UI/UX provides members with an interactive, user-friendly dashboard where they can view a snapshot of their coverage details. To allow members to own their coverage maintenance, TennCare has added new smart nudges which inform members of their case action priorities and help them track upcoming action items. This interactive approach has helped create a streamlined, dynamic workflow between members and case workers. The comprehensive homepage and the ability to access the portal across different devices were key to the collective effort of a digital, customer focused portal launch, providing members a seamless experience in managing their coverage.

In addition to the enhanced self-service portal for citizens, TennCare has also modernized its **TennCare Access** portal, which is dedicated to its **partner base of 5K+ users**. With the responsive user interface and refreshed design elements, the portal provides efficient access to all partner users, across Hospitals, Departments of Health, Departments of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, Nursing Facilities, Managed Care Organizations, and Advocacy groups to effectively assist in the application process for Tennesseans at any time, even on their tablets. They can undertake critical actions such as, reporting birth of a newborn, completing a reassessment for individuals for long term care benefits, reporting an individual's admission or discharge from their facilities, and applying for presumptive benefits for immediate determination while TennCare evaluates an applicant's request for full Medicaid coverage. This enhanced reach for the partner user base has significantly contributed to TennCare's overall mission of accelerating service to members and providing timely assistance to sensitive populations.

The **TennCare Connect** and **TennCare Access** portals are on the path of continual enhancement to increase the scope of self-service capabilities and align with changing regulations and business needs. TennCare's vision and approach is to build the portals with a strong customer focused governance by prioritizing user needs and optimizing their experiences, supported by the latest and advanced tech-stack capabilities. The portals are scheduled to introduce more enhanced self-service capabilities for members to take charge of different processes, such as filing an appeal and requesting a change in their health plan, to securely carry out additional coverage and maintenance actions smoothly.

TennCare Mobile: Re-Platform & Modernization

When the **TennCare Connect Mobile Application** first went live in 2018, it allowed members to manage and maintain their benefits directly from their mobile devices. In 2021 TennCare chose to re-platform, and thus redevelop its mobile application. TennCare ultimately redeveloped their application through Google Flutter, an innovative open-source UI software development kit providing increased customization capabilities. Flutter provided the opportunity to simplify operations and maintenance while decreasing overall operational costs, allowing TennCare to promote a higher standard of quality while efficiently modernizing the application's UX and UI. The migrated **TennCare Connect Mobile Application** was released to the public in September 2022. To further support one of the State's most vulnerable populations, TennCare also introduced a new functionality allowing users the ability to report or update a pregnancy record and add newborn(s). The migration project was Phase One of TennCare's goal to improve and enhance its mobile application and further strengthen the ties between Tennessee and its citizens.

TennCare has continued to upgrade its mobile application to increase usability while introducing essential functionalities. Modernization efforts began in Phase Two with the redesigned case dashboard and case details screens. These screens allow users to access personalized case alerts, individual coverage details, and other essential information. The

introduction of quick links in the case dashboard and a redesigned application navigation menu has made it easier than ever for members to reach their intended page destination. Users can easily access their past submissions, health plan details, document requests/submissions, notices, appeals information, and more.
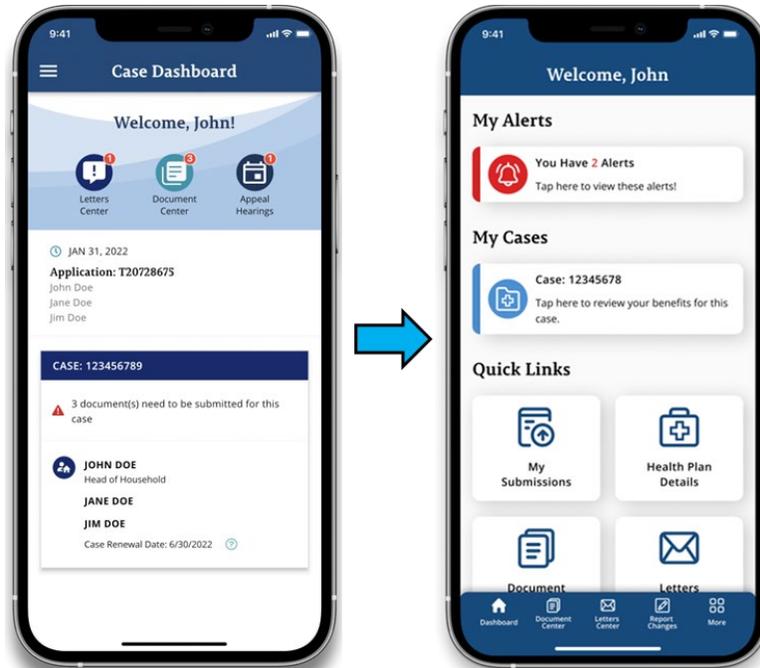

Figure 3. Old Mobile Case Dashboard vs. New Mobile Case Dashboard

The implementation of biometric authentication provides members the ability to sign into their accounts in a faster, more secure manner. Those with supported devices can bypass the need to manually sign in by instead using Face ID (iOS) or Fingerprint Unlock (Android). As part of the efforts to continually improve member outreach, TennCare also introduced mobile push notifications. This functionality provides TennCare the ability to increase engagement through personalized communication with applicants and members. Application users can opt-in to receive notifications in the following instances:

- **New Documentation Request** – Users receive a push notification when TennCare has requested additional information to help make a complete and accurate eligibility decision. Users can respond by uploading photos of the requested documentation via the Document Center.
- **New Notice to View** – Users receive a push notification when TennCare sends them a letter regarding their case. Users can view their new letter via the Letters Center.
- **Notice of Renewal Request** – Users receive a push notification when it is time to submit their annual renewal packet. Users can complete their renewal in the **TennCare Connect** portal.

Since the implementation of push notifications went live in March 2023, **over 23,000 mobile application users have signed up to receive notifications**. TennCare has sent **over 39,000 push notifications** to this ever-expanding user base. Since the release of the new Flutter application in 2022, TennCare has seen significant increases in various metrics. Within eight months, **over 90,000 users have initiated over 600,000 sessions**, total case changes submitted have **almost doubled**, and documents uploaded have **increased by over 20%**. Downloads have **increased by over 18%**, and the Google Play Store rating **increased from 3.1 to 4.6** while the iOS App Store rating remained at 4.6.

TennCare's modernization and expansion of its mobile application continues with Phase Three going live in September 2023. This release will include a complete redesign of the Report Changes and Document Center flows, providing essential usability improvements for its users. To increase user engagement, members will be able to report a change to their assisting person, and income + employment information. TennCare is introducing additional push notification types, mobile application nudging, and the ability to submit health plan change requests. With these enhancements and more in the future, TennCare shows its commitment to increasing the accessibility of its member-facing system.

Nudging & Smart Notifications

Member outreach is a key aspect of TennCare's successful management of those seeking medical assistance in Tennessee. In September 2022, TennCare introduced a smart notification system utilizing electronic nudges received via email and/or SMS notification. The implementation of this system allowed for more proactive member outreach. Electronic nudges drive communication in three key areas to help with critical case-related actions for the members:

- Encouraging members to update their addresses via TennCare Connect to help ensure future notifications are received.
- Delivering periodic nudges to inform members about their upcoming renewals and remind them to complete their actions by the determined due date. A nudge is also sent to users when they submit their renewal on paper instead of online.
- Sending reminders for members to respond to TennCare's additional information requests.

The smart notification project was instrumental in expanding TennCare's already significant digital footprint. Since its launch, **over 130,000 emails and 165,000 SMS notifications were sent to eligible members**. Introducing scalable technologies and business processes allows for continual expansion, thus providing Tennesseans further opportunities to actively take charge throughout their coverage life cycle.

From Government to Citizens: The Impact

Over the last two years, the State of Tennessee's Division of TennCare has taken vital steps to improve the way in which its members receive and maintain their benefits. System enhancements and re-development of the existing TennCare Connect platforms allowed for extensive UX and UI upgrades that have made them increasingly accessible for users. TennCare has created a seamless, citizen-centric ecosystem that continues to revolutionize access to care. TennCare's additional efforts continue to emphasize the importance of increasing and improving the channel of communication between the Tennessee government and its citizens. Implementing email and text nudging as well as mobile push notifications has allowed TennCare to optimize user outreach. This has opened the door for increased user engagement with TennCare's member-facing platforms, which directly impact the lives of Tennesseans in need.
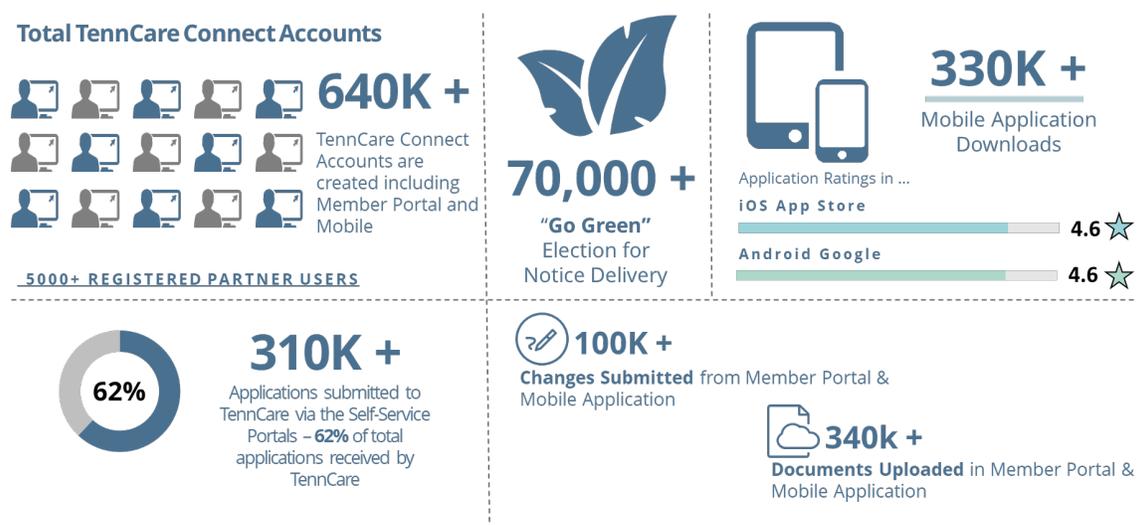
Total TennCare Connect Accounts

640K +
TennCare Connect Accounts are created including Member Portal and Mobile

5000+ REGISTERED PARTNER USERS

70,000 +
"Go Green" Election for Notice Delivery

330K +
Mobile Application Downloads

Application Ratings in …
iOS App Store — 4.6 ⭐
Android Google — 4.6 ⭐

62%

310K +
Applications submitted to TennCare via the Self-Service Portals – **62%** of total applications received by TennCare

100K +
Changes Submitted from Member Portal & Mobile Application

340k +
Documents Uploaded in Member Portal & Mobile Application

Figure 4. Impact of TennCare Connect Self-Service Portals and Mobile Application

The administration of customer-facing governance has been key to the continued success of the Division of TennCare. A champion of technological adaptation, TennCare continuously evolves in a rapidly changing landscape. Continued modernization efforts within the TennCare Connect ecosystem allow members to submit thorough applications and documentation with added accuracy. Added accuracy leads to further automation of backend processes, thus reducing worker intervention, decreasing the time required to provide eligibility decisions for households across Tennessee, and ultimately decreasing operational costs. TennCare is also exploring the inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI) and generative pretrained transformers (GPTs) to capture more insights on user behavior and aid the prioritization of new self-service capabilities across platforms. The State's continued commitment to modernizing **TennCare Connect**, **TennCare Access**, and the **TennCare Connect Mobile Application** plays an essential role in its ability to strengthen the bond between the government and its citizens.