

Measurement Considerations for Technology-Mediated Social Connection

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Agenda

- Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland Background and Data Collection
- Social Connection Efforts at Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland
- Measurement Considerations in (2) of MOWCM's Technology-Mediated Social Connection Programs
- Group Discussion

Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland

Founded in 1960, our mission is to enable people to live independently at home through the provision of nutritious meals, personal contact, and support services so they may age in place with dignity. MOWCM delivers over 1 million nutritious meals and offers support services to over 3,100 home-bound elderly Marylanders each year.

Primary Data Source/Methodology and Setting

MOWCM clients (homebound older adults living in the community)

Real-time reporting, assessments, and surveys

Tools: Annual Client Assessment/Satisfaction Survey, Upstream Social Interaction Risk Scale (U-SIRS-13), 2 item Food Insecurity Questionnaire, elements of the UCLA Loneliness Scale, Interviews

Strengths – supports longitudinal tracking, captures subjective and objective measures, well-suited for identifying risk factors and measuring intervention effectiveness.

Limitations – limited use of validated tools, self-report bias and fatigue may affect data accuracy, clients with limited access may be underrepresented.

Social Connection Efforts at MOWCM (Early 2000s – Present Day)

- Service connection through 1:1 case management
 - 1:1 Volunteer Companions
 - Phone Pals
 - Grocery Assistance Program*
 - Kibble Connection Program*
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- Small Group Social Connection Gatherings w/ TimeSlips™
 - Conversation Club
 - Call Connections w/ TimeSlips™ and CallHub
 - MDOA Tablet Program w/ The Maryland Living Well Center for Excellence (MAC) in Anne Arundel County
 - Community Dining w/ TimeSlips™

2019 – Present Day

Measurement Considerations in (2) of MOWCM's Technology-Mediated Social Connection Programs	Tablet Program	Call Connections	Lessons Learned
Access and Digital Readiness		✓	Prioritize device availability and internet access
Engagement vs. Meaningful Connection		✓	Ensure accessibility to hearing, vision and cognitively impaired participants
Outcome and Impact	✓	✓	Screen for baseline digital literacy and plan for ongoing support
Equity and Preventing Bias			Monitor ongoing participation, drop-off and consistency of use
Retention and Sustainability	✓	✓	Utilize validated tool as well as quality of life measures in planned increments
✓ Demonstrated Impact			Employ multiple outreach efforts Ask who and why?

Priority questions to help us better understand social connection

- Are virtual social connection programs equitable? (Think – do they foster connection or encourage further isolation?)
- How can qualitative data be used in tandem with quantitative data to promote and increase the success of social connection programs?
- How do we get to a universally agreed-upon benchmark for measuring loneliness across ages?

Key measurement challenges

- Capturing culturally meaningful forms of connection
- Aligning program duration, data collection and analysis to maximize results, account for technological advances and ongoing training needs
- Distinguishing key differences between loneliness and isolation