

**Pilot Program/Increase Access to Public Benefits
For Older Dual Eligible Seniors**

SL 2017-57, Section 11C.8.(b)



Report to the

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services

and

Office of the Governor

By

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

February 1, 2018

Background

During the 2016 Legislative session, House Bill 1030 was introduced. Section 12C.3.(a) of the bill awarded Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (DHHS/DSS) \$600,000 to establish an evidence-based pilot program to increase access to public benefits for seniors 65 and older who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid. DSS had the responsibility of partnering with a non-profit firm for the purpose of engaging in a data-driven campaign to help seniors aged 65 and older enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid meet their basic social needs.

This report describes the work to date including the completion of the RFA and contract with a non-profit vendor, Benefits Data Trust (BDT) for the Dual Eligible Project, as well as the selection by BDT for North Carolina to participate in a grant opportunity (Walmart Technical Grant) to expand on outreach efforts to older adults receiving Medicaid but not receiving Food and Nutrition Services. A Request for Applications (RFA) process was required for the Dual Eligible Project. North Carolina was selected through a RFQ process to receive a grant for additional outreach activities. In completing the contracting process, the first contract was completed for the grant opportunity and a second contract was completed for the Dual Eligible Project.

DSS began the process to submit a Request for Applications (RFA) in August 2016. Following completion of guideline specifications, the RFA process/requirements, and contract procedures the RFA was posted on January 3, 2017. The following requirements were noted:

- Questions Due: January 17, 2017
- Letter of Intent: January 20, 2017
- Applications Due: February 6, 2017 by 5:00 p.m.
- Anticipated Notice of Award: March 21, 2017

During this time, a Review Committee was formed to review the applications. The Review Committee met on February 9, 2017 to review the applications. On March 2, 2017, the committee met again for further discussion and to make the award. The RFA was awarded to Benefits Data Trust (BDT) on March 7, 2017.

The DHHS contract process was followed. Privacy and security are major concerns when client data is involved and must meet the Department of Information Technology standards. DSS staff were involved in the following processes.

- Determine whether Personal Identifiable Information (PII) is collected and how it will be used and stored. A Privacy Impact Assessment is required (Privacy Threshold Analysis).
- Determine what exceptions will apply (Standard Exception for Hosting Data).
- Develop a secure method of data transfer from DSS to BDT and BDT to DSS (Data Sharing Agreement).
- Implement a Risk Assessment for BDT if data is breached.
- Develop standards for data storage and access at BDT (Data Sharing Agreement).

DHHS addressed these issues and executed the contract for the Dual Eligible Pilot Project with Benefits Data Trust effective December 1, 2017. The contract will be matched by USDA with matching SNAP Outreach funding for a total of \$1.2 million through August 31, 2018.

NC DHHS/DSS began communication with County DSS Directors via conference calls, site visits and webinars to educate the counties prior to the execution of the contract. Counties are well prepared and welcome the opportunity to increase participation in food assistance programs among adults age 65 and older receiving Medicare and Medicaid.

Grant Opportunity

On August 16, 2016 NC DHHS/DSS responded to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a technical grant with Benefits Data Trust through the Walmart Foundation to assist seniors 60 to 64 receiving Medicaid but not receiving SNAP/FNS. NC DHHS/DSS was selected to partner with BDT to provide targeted outreach and application assistance to help older North Carolina residents (specifically, seniors 60 – 64 years of age) who are receiving Medicaid and are not receiving SNAP/FNS in accessing food benefits on October 3, 2016. Timelines were as follows:

- Request for Qualification (RFQ): August 16, 2016
- NC DHHS/DSS submitted RFQ: September 8, 2016
- Selection Process: October 3, 2016

All contracting and privacy and security requirements need to be met to finalize the contract. The contract was finalized July 27, 2017.

Through this partnership, the NC Benefits Center established by BDT is utilizing state level programmatic data to identify likely eligible individuals, conduct outreach, provide in-depth application assistance and follow-up, and submit Food and Nutrition Services applications to the appropriate county office.

In preparation for the initial report and the work of BDT with the technical grant funded by the Walmart Foundation working with seniors 60 - 64 receiving Medicaid but not Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and or Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), it is the expectation that the Dual Eligible Pilot Project will produce similar data. Therefore, the following information provides an overview of data collected from the BDT Walmart Technical Grant and a plan of action for the Dual Eligible Pilot Project.

Overview of Grant Implementation and BDT Plan for the Dual Eligible Pilot Project

In North Carolina, too many seniors are hungry. Despite pervasive need, only 1 in 3 eligible older adults are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) in North Carolina. North Carolina ranks 31st among states for senior SNAP participation.¹ Utilizing BDT's proven model of outreach and application assistance, the North Carolina Benefits Center will contact over 50,000 dual eligibles not yet enrolled in SNAP/FNS and enroll at least 3,480 of them by June 30, 2018. These efforts to increase SNAP/FNS participation will decrease North Carolina Medicaid costs among the older dual-eligible population, as evidenced by

¹ Cunnyngnam, K. State Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Eligibility and Participation Among Elderly Individuals, Fiscal Year 2008 to Fiscal Year 2013. July 2015. Available at: <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/download-media?MediaItemId={130AD81C-5438-4B35-83C6-BE3C0D18A8EE}>

BDT's research in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and the Hilltop Institute.^{2,3} This preliminary project targeting 60 – 64 year old seniors will lay the foundation for evaluation and estimation of NC Medicaid cost savings when seniors have access to healthy foods.

Pilot Project Plan of Action

Activity	Description	Performance Measure
<i>Targeted Identification</i>	Use data-driven strategies to identify and target outreach to seniors enrolled in Medicaid but not yet enrolled in SNAP/FNS	Match data provided by DHHS to identify approximately 53,000 dual eligible seniors for SNAP/FNS outreach
<i>Comprehensive Application Assistance</i>	Offer eligibility pre-screenings to responding households. If the household is found to be likely eligible, provide comprehensive application assistance	Submit approximately 5,800 SNAP/FNS applications on behalf of dual eligible seniors, age 65+
<i>Successful SNAP / FNS Enrollment</i>	Confirm enrollment outcomes through analysis of data provided by NC	Enroll at least 3,480 65+ dual eligibles in SNAP / FNS by June 30, 2018

While waiting to finalize the contract, and obtain federal approval of the state outreach plan funding for the Dual Eligible Pilot Project, DHHS and BDT leveraged temporary philanthropic dollars to start up and implement outreach and application assistance to the 60 – 64-year-old senior population currently receiving Medicaid. The results of these initial outreach efforts, which started at the end of August 2017, have exceeded the initial expectations of the RFA proposal. Since this population is just slightly younger than the dual-eligibles population, BDT expects that these results will likely apply to the pool of individuals included in the 65 and older category.

Contracting and data share for philanthropic work served as a learning guide for the Dual Eligible Pilot Project. Outreach materials have been finalized and process analyses have been developed to identify trends and improve efforts. Infrastructure development and analytics for comprehensive reporting are confirmed. DHHS and BDT have established a strong and supportive relationship to ensure a continued successful partnership. Over 1,300 senior households 60 – 64 have accessed the benefits of comprehensive application assistance between August 25th and December 19, 2017.

Positive results have been obtained for the outreach efforts to 60 – 64 year seniors who are currently receiving Medicaid, not yet enrolled in SNAP/FNS via the Walmart Technical Grant.

²Samuel, Laura J.; Szanton, Sarah L.; Cahill, Rachel; Wolff, Jennifer L.; Ong, Pinchuan; Zielinskie, Ginger; Betley, Charles. 2017. "Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Affect Hospital Utilization Among Older Adults? The Case of Maryland." Population Health Management, 00:00.

³ Szanton, Sarah L.; Samuel, Laura J.; Cahill, Rachel; Zielinskie, Ginger; Wolff, Jennifer L.; Thorpe Jr., Roland J.; Betley, Charles. 2017. "Food Assistance is Associated with Decreased Nursing Home Admissions for Maryland's Dually Eligible Older Adults." BMC Geriatrics, 17:162.

- This population needs and wants benefits application and enrollment assistance according to a response rates up to 25% (compared to 1 – 3% for typical direct mail), and the state agency messaging resonates with them.
- Seniors needing additional support can elect document assistance with BDT, which enables them to effectively complete the application process (86% enrollment rate).
- Overall, 77% of seniors for whom BDT submits an application are able to enroll in benefits (compared to a 62% average in BDT's other states).
- The annual average benefit amount for this population is \$540, which increased their annual income by 5% on average (from approximately \$10,000 to \$10,500).

The following studies describe the effectiveness of BDT's Service Delivery Model:

- An evaluation from Mathematica Policy Research on behalf of the USDA found BDT's model to be the “most efficient and cost-effective” enrollment strategy when compared to other models nationally.
- BDT recently engaged in research to examine how SNAP enrollment affects dual-eligible seniors' health outcomes and health care costs in partnership with Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and the Hilltop Institute.
 - The research published in peer-reviewed journals showed that SNAP participation significantly reduces the likelihood that a dual-eligible senior will enter a long-term care facility by 23% and the likelihood of being admitted to the hospital by 14% – significantly reducing Medicaid costs.⁴
- Finally, BDT is actively engaged in a random control trial headed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Northwestern University of seniors aged 60 and older.
 - Results indicate that 6% of the control group (with no outreach) successfully enrolled in SNAP, 11% of the targeted outreach group successfully enrolled, and 18% of the BDT intervention group successfully enrolled, indicating that the BDT model triples the rate of successful SNAP enrollment.

The Department looks forward to completing the Dual Eligible Pilot Project to help seniors apply for and enroll in Food and Nutrition Services, which will significantly improve their health and decrease healthcare costs.

⁴ *Id.*

The following describe the outcomes of the Walmart Technical Grant achieved through the contract with BDT.

Graph1: 60 – 64 Senior Application and Enrollment Results, August – December 2017

