



## Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) Shared Learning Resource

### Partnership Development to Increase MDPP Referrals and Marketing

#### MDPP Supplier Interviewees:

- Lana Kunik, The Sight Center of Northwest Pennsylvania, PA
- Cindy Lafond, The Granite YMCA, NH

In March 2023, as part of the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) Enrollment Project\*, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) conducted interviews with two experienced MDPP suppliers to understand best practices for building partnerships that result in increased referrals to an MDPP program. The two featured interviewees were selected based on their roles as peer mentors in the MDPP Enrollment Project.

#### About This Resource

Based on the interviews, this resource distills best practices for various types of partnerships that MDPP suppliers may consider:

- 1) [Area Agencies on Aging \(AAAs\)](#)
- 2) [Cable Access Television and News Publications](#)
- 3) [Colleges and Universities](#)
- 4) [Elected Officials](#)
- 5) [Senior Living Facilities](#)
- 6) [Trustees and Board Members](#)
- 7) [Staff, Patients, and Public Health Officials](#)

*For more MDPP resources and webinars, please visit the [MDPP Implementation Resources](#) page on the National DPP Coverage Toolkit (Coverage Toolkit Home Page → Medicare → MDPP Implementation Resources). Please note, on the MDPP Implementation Resources page there is a section dedicated to webinars and resources about increasing referrals and retention that provide complementary information to this resource.*

*\*The MDPP Enrollment Project is a technical assistance and funding opportunity for MDPP suppliers that are ready and able to focus efforts to increase enrollment in their programs but may be lacking the administrative and/or billing infrastructure to facilitate claims submission. In addition to providing access to a data management and billing and claims platform, this project provides access to technical assistance to help with provider referral support and communication and marketing support. The opportunity is funded and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Diabetes Translations and NACDD with technical assistance support from the American Medical Association (AMA).*



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### Partnering with Area Agencies on Aging

Area Agencies on Aging are public or private nonprofit entities that work to address concerns of older individuals in a designated region. The population of older adults is expected to grow to 73 million by 2030 and AAAs are working to provide the home and community-based resources needed to support these individuals. For more information see the [AAA 2020 National Survey Report](#).

The Sight Center, an MDPP supplier in Northwestern Pennsylvania, has had a successful partnership with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs, pronounced 'triple As'). Lana Kunik, Director of the Diabetes Prevention Program at The Sight Center, found partnership with AAAs to be mutually beneficial for the MDPP supplier and the AAAs themselves.

AAAs are a network of approximately 622 non-profit organizations that serve specific geographic areas designated by the state they are located in. While most AAAs are operated regionally or locally, some AAAs that cover smaller states or less densely populated states offer services statewide. AAAs receive federal funding from the [Older Americans Act](#) (OAA) established in 1965 and most recently reauthorized in 2020. The OAA federal funds are supplemented with other state and local funds and help to provide elderly populations with services such as

assistance with nutrition, caregiver support, and care management. AAAs are direct service providers and contract with other service providers to support their members. Additional basic services that most AAAs provide are connections to home and community-based assistance programs, insurance counseling, and transportation. All AAAs have local hotlines and websites for those interested in their services.

AAAs serve an active aging population likely to include Medicare beneficiaries eligible for the MDPP, and they can provide location sites to host in-person MDPP sessions. The Sight Center found that multiple AAA locations were located in their service area and offered to conduct an in-person MDPP cohort at one of them. This created an opportunity that can now be duplicated at other AAA locations, including in rural areas. These efforts have allowed the AAA to see the benefits MDPP offers to their members, which has opened doors for the Sight Center to ask them to promote the program.

AAAs are required to offer evidence-based programs to the populations they serve, and partnering with an MDPP supplier gives AAAs access to resources and trained Lifestyle Coaches who can provide the program. When trying to partner with a AAA, focus on reasons why it would be beneficial for them to provide an MDPP program to their members:

- Offering the MDPP benefits the AAA by allowing them to meet state and/or federal requirements to offer evidence-based programs
- Offering the MDPP creates a community of wellness that is aligned with other programs a AAA offers such as group exercise classes, blood pressure control programs, etc., improving the health of their members

The Sight Center also gathered statistics to demonstrate the effectiveness of the MDPP for the population the AAA serves. When exploring a potential partnership, the Sight Center reviewed the county health system community health needs assessments. Ms. Kunik then presented the case for offering the MDPP to the AAA members by conveying the following statistics about the population in the geographical area:

- Nearly two-thirds of the deaths in Erie County are attributable to chronic disease
- Chronic disease is a major cause of disability and death in Pennsylvania and accounts for 70 percent of all deaths in the Commonwealth
- Pennsylvania has the 25<sup>th</sup> highest adult obesity rate in the nation, according to the [State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America](#)
- Over 10 percent of Erie County adults have diabetes, which is higher than the state average of 9.1 percent
- Pennsylvania's percent of adults with a BMI >30 (obese) is 29 percent



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- Erie County's percent of adults with a BMI >30 (obese) is 30.9 percent
- Crawford County's percent of adults with a BMI >30 (obese) is 34.4 percent

*"I have heard about others who have asked AAAs to partner but [the AAAs] are not interested. But maybe they are not interested because [the MDPP supplier] hasn't done their homework to present the case for partnership."*

— Lana Kunik

The Sight Center does not have formal agreements or contracts with the AAAs with which they are working. Please note that not all individuals aged 65 years or older involved with a AAA will be eligible for the MDPP. Consider how to screen for program eligibility and coverage status. For example, the Sight Center travels to AAA sites to offer session zeros with potential participants to assess for eligibility and promote a call to action to enroll in the MDPP.

The Sight Center has found that the AAAs they have partnered with tend to encourage enrollment of all individuals over age 65, even those who may already have a type 2 diabetes diagnosis. The Sight Center is working on accessing funding from an outside donor to allow those who do not meet the program eligibility criteria to participate.

### **Call to Action to partner with a AAA in your area:**

Find the AAAs in your area by searching zip codes or cities/state on the [Eldercare Locator](#) website. Once you have identified AAAs in your service area, find a contact and conduct research to create a presentation or value proposition on why partnering with your organization can be beneficial for AAAs. The Sight Center has found success by contacting Senior Center Services Directors and, once contact has been initiated, working closely with Center Managers.



## Partnering with Cable Access Television and News Publications

40 percent of the U.S. subscribes to cable access television. While there is competition from online streaming services, cable access television had a revenue greater than \$58 million in 2021. For more information on cable access television in recent years see the following [source](#).

The Sight Center utilizes cable access television as a means to promote the MDPP to potential participants. There is a large older adult viewership of cable access television, and the Sight Center has found that a partnership with cable access television can serve as a referral source as well as an education source for older adult populations.

The Sight Center initiated a partnership with cable access television by finding contact information for the local station online and sending an email about reserving a space for a 30-minute interview focused on the MDPP. The Sight Center

then conducted 30-minute interviews with registered nurses (RNs) and past MDPP participants to highlight the benefits and successes of the program which were then aired on cable access television. At the end of the interviews the National DPP risk assessment was shown on the screen. The Sight Center did not need a signed contract with the station, but they did have to pay for the 30-minute interviews to be aired.

In addition to cable access television, the Sight Center partners with a senior news publication where the MDPP is promoted in the health section through a monthly highlight. This independent publication focuses on the older adult community and those providing assistance to them. It is supported by advertising and subscriptions and is not



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affiliated with any political group or government agency. **The publication receives approximately 50,000 readers per month and is the Sight Center's largest referral source.**

The Sight Center has a signed contract with the news publication to secure a spot for MDPP information each month. They were able to initiate a partnership with this publication by finding contact information within the publication itself as well as online. They work directly with the publisher and editor each month to publish the MDPP advertisement highlighted as an evidence-based program that is proven to be more effective for older adults.

### **Call to Action for Partnering with Cable Access Television and News Publications**

Find which cable access television networks are available in your area by searching on the [Smart Move](#) website or calling their toll-free number. Once you have identified networks in your service area, you can move forward with finding their contact information and reaching out to reserve time to air information on your MDPP. Additionally, you can search online for news publications focused on older adult populations in your area and work with them to create a section for the MDPP in their publication.



### **Partnering with Colleges and Universities**

In 2022, there were a [total](#) of 155 allopathic (MD) medical schools and 38 osteopathic (DO) medical schools in the United States. In 2021, there were 62,443 applicants to medical schools which represents a 17.8 percent increase in applications from 2020. For more information about medical school enrollment, see the 2021 Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) applicant [report](#).

The Granite YMCA in New Hampshire, an MDPP supplier, has found success in increasing awareness about prediabetes and the National DPP lifestyle change program among health care professionals by forming partnerships with state colleges. Cindy Lafond, the Executive Director of Health Interventions at the Granite YMCA, has worked with the three major colleges in the state of New Hampshire and has found success working with the Mass College of Pharmacy.

Partnering with colleges and universities provides an opportunity to educate upcoming doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and others about the MDPP and other evidence-based programs focused on prevention. It gives individuals entering the health care field both clinical and community support perspectives for healthy living.

*“Creating communications with health care professional students [allows them to] have a different relationship with prevention than those [who] came before.”*

- Cindy Lafond

The Granite YMCA utilizes the help of school faculty volunteers who coach incoming students on preventing type 2 diabetes. Additionally, the faculty volunteers conduct student courses such as Communication through Motivational Interviewing to prepare students for working in the healthcare field. The Granite YMCA has worked with the Mass College of Pharmacy to include relevant components of the MDPP throughout all three years of students' programs. In addition to this, the partnership between the college and The Granite YMCA has allowed students to fulfill required college volunteer hours by providing opportunities to volunteer and assist MDPP supplier staff.



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The Mass College of Pharmacy and the Granite YMCA worked with the state of New Hampshire to set aside state money to help with the cost of training 30 to 45 students a year (for five years) in diabetes prevention. A formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the Mass College of Pharmacy and the Granite YMCA to secure use of state funding and to initiate student trainings.

### Call to Action to Partner with Colleges and Universities

Utilize the Department of Education's [College Map](#) to locate colleges and universities within the MDPP supplier service area that are offering majors or programs that could benefit from a partnership with an MDPP supplier. Contact faculty members or the dean and set up a time to present the value proposition of working with an MDPP supplier.



### Partnering with Elected Officials

There are 519,682 elected officials throughout the U.S.

A large majority of these elected officials are within local districts. See this [infographic](#) for more information about the breakdown of elected officials.

The Sight Center has found success by partnering with elected officials within the state and the cities they serve. Most elected officials can be contacted by phone or email and may be willing to set up an in-person meeting where an organization can promote why working with MDPP suppliers can be beneficial for their constituents. Support from elected officials can create opportunities for a variety of other partnerships.

The Sight Center worked with elected officials in their area to promote the MDPP over social media, on the elected officials' websites, as well as through in-person activities. The Sight Center has used an elected

official's office to host an informal health fair where constituents were able to learn about the MDPP, ask questions, and take the risk assessment. The health fair was at little cost to the Sight Center because the office space was free. The Sight Center found that constituents were willing to listen due to the influence of the elected officials' interest in the MDPP. The Sight Center was able to find contact information for the elected official's chief of staff through an online search. The chief of staff approves scheduling and is the best contact to reach out to for support, especially around the time of reelection.

Take time to learn about the city or state that the elected officials are representing as well as their history of policy decisions as these can be a helpful indication of their interest in working with an MDPP supplier. Consider searching specifically for elected officials that have a focus on older adult populations. Contracts are not required to work with elected officials. The Sight Center shared that to continually support a partnership with elected officials, they have their Director of Marketing and Outreach send quarterly updates to say thank you and to share positive outcomes of their continued support towards working with an MDPP supplier.

### Call to Action to work with Elected Officials

Using the [USA.gov](#) search function, consider searching for the elected officials in your area. Set up a meeting to discuss why working with an MDPP supplier can benefit their constituents. Consider creating a list of the elected officials in your area and conduct further research to see which elected officials may be more receptive to working with an MDPP supplier based on past policy decisions.



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### Partnering with Senior Living Facilities

It is estimated that by 2030, 20 percent of the population will be 65 years of age or older. As this population grows, the need for senior living facilities of all kinds will increase. To find more information about the kinds of senior living facilities available and how each state ranks in overall care for older adult populations go to [Caring.com](https://www.caring.com).

The Sight Center has worked with senior living facilities to recruit participants for the MDPP. After finding contact information online, the Sight Center connected with an employee from the senior living facility to schedule a time when MDPP supplier staff could utilize a community room to conduct the risk assessment with individuals residing within the facility.

The Sight Center has found that working with senior living facilities results in great retention of participants after initial recruitment. MDPP sessions can be held within the facility for participants (at no cost for space). Additionally, a senior living facility provides a great space for MDPP participants to interact and support each other throughout the program. The Sight Center noted they tend to use grant funding to provide sessions at senior living facilities since there will likely be individuals

interested in participating who are ineligible. The verification process of eligibility and coverage can be difficult in this setting and grant funding allows for all individuals who are interested to participate.

The Sight Center does not have a contract in place with the senior living facility they partner with to conduct onsite recruitment and program delivery; however, they do have an informal agreement in place to secure a spot for MDPP promotion in the senior publication that is delivered to residents each month. The Sight Center continues to build on their relationships with senior living facilities by closing the care loop. They securely report health outcomes to the Senior Center Manager(s), highlight the locations that are hosting MDPP cohorts, and keep the facilities informed when new cohorts are beginning in their service area.

#### Call to Action

Utilize the [Caring.com](https://www.caring.com) search feature to find senior living facilities within your MDPP supplier service area. Consider reaching out to a contact at the facility to set up time to meet and share the reasons why working with an MDPP supplier can be beneficial for the residents. Attempt to set up a time when you can use space in the facility to conduct the [prediabetes risk assessment](#) with residents.



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### Partnering with Trustees and Board Members

Trustees and board members can be strong partners to work with

given their connections and knowledge. Share the value of working with an MDPP supplier and connect the MDPP mission to trustees' and board members' personal and professional goals. For more information on ways to create a partnership with trustees and board members see the following [Forbes Leadership](#) article.

The Granite YMCA utilized their partnership with their YMCA board of trustees to share information about the MDPP. They presented the value proposition to the trustees and board members which resulted in an opportunity to have monthly meetings between the trustees and MDPP supplier staff. The monthly meetings are now used as an opportunity for the staff to present updates and successes of the program.

After building this trust, the trustees and board members began to promote the MDPP and have even referred potential participants to the Granite YMCA's MDPP program. This partnership has opened the door for other opportunities that the Granite YMCA can now consider. For example, one of the trustees connected the Granite YMCA MDPP program with a contact from a large health care provider who is willing to meet and discuss a potential partnership. Additionally, another trustee

assisted the Granite YMCA in scheduling time to present the program to a Senator from New Hampshire. The Granite YMCA has formed many new partnerships and increased MDPP referrals because they were willing to share the benefits of the MDPP with their trustees and board members.

*"You never know who you are sitting next to or having coffee with – that person may become invested if you ask the right questions and tell the right story."*

- Cindy Lafond

The Granite YMCA shared that the key to success with some partners like trustees and board members is to have continual communication and follow-up. This can be a barrier for some MDPP suppliers, but it is necessary to maintain partnerships. The Granite YMCA has prepared templates that can be sent to trustees and board members at specific times to provide updates and keep open communication.

#### Call to Action

Consider talking to the trustees and board members within your organization to set up a time when information about the program can be shared. If there are no trustees and board members within your organization, consider doing research to find trustees and board members from partner organizations. Have your leadership attend board or trustee meetings where an update on MDPP work can be given. Additionally, consider connecting with leadership at a local YMCA to share quarterly updates about the work being done with the MDPP.



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### Partnering with Staff, Patients, and Public Health Officials

Internal staff members can serve as diabetes prevention partners as

well as potential participants in the National DPP lifestyle change program or MDPP. Please visit the [Participating Payers](#) page of the National DPP Coverage Toolkit to learn about private and public employers that provide the National DPP lifestyle change program to employees.

The Granite YMCA has worked with their human resources (HR) department to bring on two private insurance companies to cover the National DPP lifestyle change program for their internal staff. Throughout the program, participants were reimbursed for session attendance. The goal was to promote small changes to build strong and trusting relationships that would lead to retention in the program and lasting behavior change.

To help promote the National DPP lifestyle change program to staff and other partners, the Granite YMCA created a video presentation on why diabetes prevention is important. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) Director shared a testimonial of the program in the video. **Through this process, the Granite YMCA has learned that having a prepared elevator**

**pitch ready to share is a key to success.** The [marketing rule of seven](#) states that an individual needs to see a message approximately seven times before they view what is being marketed as legitimate. The Granite YMCA plans to continue to use the promotional video and accompanying brochures to promote the National DPP lifestyle change program and MDPP to internal staff as well as partners.

During this marketing initiative, the Granite YMCA placed an emphasis on risk of prediabetes due to lifestyle which captured the attention of public health officials in the state health department's chronic disease unit. The Granite YMCA worked to inform the public health officials on what their organization could do to help the state health department rather than asking the department for grant funding upfront. This helped to create a trusting partnership, and the public health officials were willing to work with the Granite YMCA to move diabetes prevention forward.

In addition to working with their HR department, the Granite YMCA opened many doors for referrals to the MDPP by outreaching to past cancer patients from the 2013 Live Strong at the Y initiative. **The Granite YMCA conducted outreach to these patients after learning that 68 percent of the patients that participated in the Live Strong initiative were at risk for type 2 diabetes.** The Granite YMCA shared the elevator pitch for the MDPP with Live Strong participants and gathered support. Some of the Live Strong participants were willing to connect the Granite YMCA MDPP supplier staff with various doctors open to promoting diabetes prevention.

*"You almost have to look at it like {they are} a partner to keep updated rather than a resource to be tapped into."*

- Cindy Lafond

To continue partnerships with internal staff, former Live Strong participants, and public health officials, the Granite YMCA ensures there is bi-directional communication occurring to let their partners know how many individuals have enrolled as participants and what successful outcomes have been achieved through the program.



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### Call to Action

Like the Granite YMCA, consider creating a video presentation that can be used in various settings to promote working with an MDPP supplier. Build accompanying brochures and pamphlets that could be used in conjunction with the recorded video presentation. Additionally, once a meeting is set with a partner, consider tailoring a PowerPoint presentation to the specific partners' needs.

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