



Agency creates virtual workplace with Office@Hand

- **Business needs** - a way to stay in touch with clients who still desperately needed help after the COVID-19 pandemic closed the social service agency's offices.
- **Networking solution** - Cloud-based AT&T Office@Hand keeps staff available regardless of where they are working.
- **Business value proposition** - Responsive service to clients, ability to work from any location
- **Industry focus** - Social services
- **Size** - 2,600 clients served last year

About the Community Health Council of Wyandotte County

The Community Health Council of Wyandotte County (CHC) is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded by public health stakeholders to improve health and health access for Wyandotte County, Kansas residents—especially vulnerable populations.

The situation

Even as COVID-19 forced the Community Health Council of Wyandotte County to send staff home, the pandemic intensified clients' need for assistance. The Kansas social service agency needed a way to keep the lines of communication open and assist its clients without putting staff or clients at risk of infection.

Solution

AT&T Office@Hand made it a simple matter for CHC staff to remain responsive. The cloud-based solution connects workers with clients and other care providers via phone, fax, text, and audio/video conferencing, enabling the continued delivery of desperately needed services.

The Community Health Council of Wyandotte County (CHC) aims to improve access to healthcare for Wyandotte County residents—especially vulnerable and historically oppressed populations—through advocacy, collaboration, and education. It does this by creating strategic collaborations and innovative programs with community partners.

The organization consists of several core programs that work to help people access healthcare and navigate the health insurance system. It also promotes infant health. Programs include:

- The Kansas Assistance Network, LLC, which helps Kansas and Missouri residents enroll in programs like Medicare, Medicaid, the insurance marketplace, and other government assistance programs
- Health, Equity, and Action for Transformation, which works to increase health equity for historically oppressed populations
- Community Health Worker Initiative, which provides patient-centered healthcare and resource navigation with a focus on chronic conditions, COVID-19, and maternal-infant health
- Cradle KC and Every Baby to 1, which work to prevent infant mortality and implement education and support programs

Molly Gotobed, Program Director of the Kansas Assistance Network, said CHC was created in 2002. “We are a nonprofit in Kansas City, Kansas that basically helps folks access healthcare services, although we have a wide variety of programs and initiatives,” she said. CHC’s workload increased dramatically when the Affordable Care Act was introduced in 2013.

At the time, only 25 to 30% of county residents had health insurance. “That’s when CHC really started taking on local work and providing direct services. We were one of the groups that created Enroll Wyandotte, which was part of a community collaboration to help folks sign up for the health insurance marketplace.”

A one-stop shop for clients

Within a year, CHC had helped to increase the number of insured residents by 8%. “That was awesome. It was one of the biggest increases in the state, and our mayor at the time was invited to meet President Obama,” she said.

Gotobed was an intern when CHC began helping people obtain insurance coverage. Today as a program director at the organization, she continues to help connect families with community resources and provide education about health insurance and how to get healthcare coverage.

“We are licensed health insurance agents who adhere to the federal assister model of providing unbiased assistance to people with the marketplace and Medicaid applications,” she said. In addition, she and her colleagues also help them understand and navigate the insurance system, which she terms “incredibly complicated.”

“We want to serve as a one-stop shop for Medicaid, the insurance marketplace, and Medicare applications, but we also provide wraparound services to people,” she said. “We assist with enrollment for food stamps, cash assistance, childcare assistance, and anything else that the client may need.”

Staying connected during the pandemic

The COVID-19 outbreak intensified the needs of CHC's clients. "For about a year and a half, we just kind of had our heads down doing COVID relief work. And it was really important that we had the help that we needed from our partners and community health workers to meet the needs of those clients," Gotobed said. "It was very overwhelming because people were unable to pay their bills and were losing their homes."

The American Rescue Plan allowed CHC staff and other organizations to help provide for some client needs. "That was something that took a lot of time because we received dozens and dozens of calls every day from people applying for financial assistance to be able to pay their bills," she said.

CHC's office in downtown Kansas City also received many walk-ins, but helping them became increasingly difficult when many staff began working remotely during the pandemic. "Technology became vital to allow us to stay in touch with the community," Gotobed said.

The organization wanted to disconnect its phone service when staff began to work virtually. "There was nobody in the office," she said. "So we had to figure out a way that we could all still stay connected, but still keep our business phones separate from our home phones."

Increased productivity

After researching several possible solutions, CHC chose AT&T Office@Hand, a cloud-based system

that enables staff to connect with clients and one another through voice calls, faxes, text messages, and audio/videoconferencing.

"We actually shopped around for a little while and just felt like the prices and the AT&T Office@Hand setup seemed the most user-friendly and would fit our needs the best," she said. "We basically needed a virtual office, and that's what we ended up getting with Office@Hand."

The solution helps CHC staff be more productive, whether they're working from home or out in the field. "It has been a great way for us to still feel like we are in the hub when we're not. We're able to transfer calls and still have our call tree and do everything we had to do in the building prior to the pandemic."

AT&T Office@Hand can be accessed through an app on personal cellphones or on dedicated cellphones owned by CHC. "About 75 percent chose to get a separate cellphone, and the rest of us use the app on our own phones," Gotobed said. Both ways work well for staff. CHC also has the ability to use PCs and tablets when using Office@Hand, which adds much needed flexibility in how and where their employees work throughout their day.

Eliminating barriers for clients

AT&T Office@Hand shields the staff's personal phone numbers from clients' view, which is important, she said. Clients dial CHC's main number; to reach a particular staff person, they can use an extension number. It's simple for staff to transfer calls internally and externally.

“If somebody calls my number and needs someone from another department, I just say, ‘Hold on, let me transfer you.’ And that has been huge,” she said. The solution also enables CHC to include people from other organizations in its call tree.

“We see enough barriers as it is, and the community gets handed off so frequently that if somebody calls the wrong number and you ask them to call another number, they develop this fatigue and then they don’t end up calling,” Gotobed said.

New ways to achieve goals

AT&T Office@Hand has helped CHC find new ways to achieve its goals. “We have a wide variety of organizations that feed into us, and we do a lot of direct outreach,” she said. During the pandemic, CHC helped people get rides to vaccination and testing sites and delivered boxes of food to families in need. “We made a lot of calls with that, but then we also received a lot of calls.”

“AT&T Business has really helped us, especially when it comes to reaching clients during COVID,” she said. “We’ve been doing a lot of COVID relief, and so it’s enabled us to reach more people and stay connected better throughout these entire two years.”

AT&T Office@Hand has amplified the effectiveness of CHC staff. “Having the proper technology and communications really helped, because if people couldn’t get ahold of us, we couldn’t give them help to pay their utility bills.”

CHC has leveraged AT&T Business services to support the work of its caring staff. “Office@Hand keeps us all connected with each other and the community as if we were in the office when we’re not, and that helps us continue to serve as many people as possible,” Gotobed said.



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Molly Gotobed,
Program Director, Kansas Action Network