

Making the Call

TLC QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2012

Meet Your Coach:

She knows quitting is hard. Her job is to make it a little easier.

Melanie was a Quit Coach® with the American Cancer Society® Quit For Life® Program – the nation's leading tobacco cessation program – before she joined the Veterans Administration National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) Telephone Lifestyle Coaching (TLC) pilot in late 2011. The program works with veterans focused on six behavior change goals, including Melanie's specialty in quitting tobacco.

"One of my participants just had his ninth call. On his very first call, his confidence and motivation

were very low," Coach Melanie said. "He was really hesitant about it. He couldn't picture himself quitting. Last week, during my call with him, he said, 'Now I can't picture myself

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ever taking a puff again.'

"That was a pretty awesome experience."

TLC was launched in November 2011 and since that time more than 3,200 Veterans have participated. The two-year pilot program has a goal of serving 4,500 veterans per year by providing phone-based coaching in six areas of behavior change – weight loss, nutrition, stress, physical activity, quitting tobacco and alcohol use.



Participant after participant, Melanie says the stories are the same. People want to quit tobacco for their health. Or lose weight for their health. The health reasons are the same, but the goals and strategies used to reach them are based on each individual participant.

Melanie shares that, "Most of the time, when I ask, 'Why are you wanting to lose weight?' or 'Why do you want to quit smoking?' Nine times out of 10 it's because of their health and something that's come up."

Something that's come up refers to a bad test result with their VA doctor or some other health-related issue, which often drives the medical professional to refer to TLC as another resource. And the participants, Melanie said, are almost always receptive to the additional assistance.

"It's really all their decision," she said. "(Veteran participants) want the coaching, and they're good about taking the calls."

The fact that Veterans want to pick up the phone for program calls makes working with the program that much more rewarding, Melanie said. "You're working with them through nine calls. It's really gratifying to know you're helping them along and helping them reach these goals."

June 2012 TLC Recruitment Winner: VA Northern California HCS, Mather, California Lose Weight and Get Healthier

HPDP Program Manager Cynthia Wold credits preparation and some “cheerleading” for the success of TLC at the VA Northern California HCS, which won the TLC recruitment competition in June with a 36-percent increase in enrolled Veterans. “I worked with Dr. Lorrie Strohecker, a primary care physician and our VISN HPDP lead, and Dr. Jeffrey Cass, our HBC and MI and PACT lead, to develop a launch plan for the program,” she explains. “That plan provided the framework for the collaboration and promotion that have helped make the TLC pilot a success here.”

Empowerment

And the HCS has not been the only winner. Veterans are telling Wold how much TLC has helped them change their lives and get healthier. “Our patients are typically working on multiple goals with their health coaches, but losing weight is the most common one,” she says. “I’ve talked to several of our graduates and they say that TLC is a success because it’s really empowered them to better manage their health and continue the lifestyle improvements they’ve initiated.”

The program has also empowered Wold in her interactions with clinicians at both the HCS’ remote clinics and main facility located in Mather, which is near Sacramento. “TLC has helped me develop direct relationships with primary care providers for whom I don’t provide clinical services, which has been a big plus,” she says. “Working with me on TLC also has helped them understand what I do, what HPDP is, and how it can help Veterans.”

Motivation

Wold explains that the marketing and informational campaign for TLC initially targeted Rural Health, then expanded to the other CBOCs. “I went out to field sites with a PowerPoint and educational materials and met with local staff members,” she says. “We discussed their needs, as well as the multiple benefits that TLC could provide in terms of time, resources, and patient care.” Starting TLC

sub-consults in January 2012, the Mather team rolled out the program first at the smaller Chico and Redding CBOCs, and later at the larger facilities. Post-launch, Wold has maintained relationships with points-of-contact at each site by calling or meeting with them as-needed, and periodically distributing encouragement, as well as the updates and information on TLC that are provided by NCP.

Acknowledgment

Wold’s cheerleading efforts for TLC have extended to the facility’s consistently high clinician-referrers, too. In late May 2012, she personally thanked these primary care providers for their great referral work—a recognition that she believes “provided acknowledgment and added motivation that likely helped boost TLC enrollment.” One such clinician who was recognized was psychiatrist Dr. Julie Young, who is embedded in primary care and, as a primary contact for TLC, has been a key program proponent.

Now over half a year into the pilot, Wold says that providers are realizing how great a resource TLC is, even if they probably haven’t yet seen all of its benefits to VHA care. “We’re all so focused on completing the pilot that we’ve yet to step back and start to quantify its value,” she explains. “But as we continue to get more experience with and results from TLC, I know that the positive impacts for both Veterans and staff will be even more apparent and far-reaching.”

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Just Right:

Inspired by loss, Kimela Nisely gets TLC support to make lasting health changes

Veteran Kimela Nisely had smoked for 32 years, but had always wanted to quit. "My husband recently passed away from the complications of emphysema and COPD," she explains. "And that was what finally motivated me to make the change."

When Kimela's primary care provider at the James E. Van Zandt VAMC in Altoona, Pennsylvania, recommended TLC, she knew it was a good fit. The coaching support and program convenience really appealed to her, in part because of her history of unsuccessful attempts to quit tobacco. "I'd had no success with cessation programs over the years...until I started TLC," she says.

Now, Kimela is proud to say that she's been smoke free for over 5 months. "I quit cigarettes on May 16, 2012—my son's birthday and my wedding anniversary—and I feel really good!" she reports. "TLC gave me the help and encouragement I needed to make such a big lifestyle change."

Kimela raves about the telephone support her health coach has provided. "The number of calls was just right—not too many or too few—and it was really convenient being able to call from home," she explains. "On each call, my coach provided the helpful tips and education I needed to keep moving towards my goal."

Kimela also appreciated the genuine concern that her coach had for her. "It was nice to know that I could call back anytime I wanted," she says. "And it was nice to feel like someone really cares about me and my goals." With the support of TLC program staff, and weekly appointments with a behavioral health social worker, Kimela has been able "to quit, and *stay* quit!"

TLC also is helping Kimela address another long-standing health challenge: weight. "My weight has fluctuated since I was a teenager, and as with smoking, I've tried different weight-control programs without success," she says. "But with the help of my coach, I've also been able to achieve my goal of losing weight." Now, she's exercising and watching her calories. "Through TLC, I've gone from 252 pounds down to 206 pounds!" Kimela says. "I'm aiming for 189 pounds by December 2012, and with the support of TLC and my health coach, I know I can do it!"



TLC By the Numbers

To date, TLC has had **19,429** contacts with Veterans. The program has received **6,783** consults and **3,977** Veterans have enrolled in the program. **947** Veterans have completed their final coaching call. **96%** of Veterans surveyed reported they would recommend the TLC Program.

Those enrolled in the program have set

13,434 goals.



45.3% of survey respondents have quit using tobacco.



34.6% of survey respondents have improved their time spent exercising



15.1% reported 5% to 10% weight loss.



6.5% reported greater than 10% weight loss.

TLC Healthy Living Goal: Strive for a Healthy Weight



Veterans in the TLC program may choose to strive for a healthy weight, and with the support of a TLC coach, identify and practice behaviors to manage their weight.

How to know if you are at a healthy weight:

- If you are gaining weight, you are taking in more calories than your body is using. These extra calories are stored as fat, and you will gain weight. If you are losing weight, you are eating fewer calories than your body is using. Your body is using stored fat cells for energy, so your weight is decreasing.
- A simple way for you to know if you are at a healthy weight is to know your body mass index (BMI), a measure of weight by height.

	Underweight	Healthy Weight	Overweight	Obese
BMI	<18.5	18.5-24.9	25-29.9	30+

How you will benefit from maintaining a healthy weight:

- You will have greater energy and stamina.
- You can prevent or control many diseases and conditions. If you are overweight or obese, you increase your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, heart disease, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and sleep apnea.

What you can do to maintain a healthy weight:

- You can **eat wisely** and choose a variety of low calorie, nutritious foods and beverages in the basic food groups. Make sure to select foods that limit your intake of fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol. Instead, eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- You can be **physically active**. For health benefits, you can do at least 2 ½ hours per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, or 1 ¼ hours per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or an equal combination of both. You'll see a difference in your weight and your health.
- You'll find that making lifestyle changes that include eating wisely, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight are keys to maintaining good health.

What if I need to lose weight?

- Losing even a little will improve your health. If you lose as little as 5–10% of your current body weight, you can lower your risks for many diseases.
- A safe weight loss is 1–2 pounds per week. It may take 6 months or more to reach your ultimate goal, but if you make gradual lifestyle changes, you can maintain a healthier weight for life.

Coaches Corner

Coach Christie has been working with a Veteran who started with a BMI of 81.6. He has lost 36 pounds (585 lbs down to 549 lbs) and his BMI is down to 76.6. He and his wife have been working diligently on his weight loss goals. They are using the Healthy Plate method and are working on regular meals with appropriate meal timing. They are so appreciative of the phone-based program as he is literally unable to fit into the office of his dietitian at the VA.

Coach Laura completed call 8 with a TLC participant whose goal was to decrease stress from 10/10 to 4-6/10. During this call she rated her stress at a 2! This participant is living in a small town, and does not work outside the home, or have any close friends nearby for support. She recently lost two people who were very close to her. Those are just some of the challenges she has been working through. She has tracked her stress, journaled, worked to get out more (even if just for a walk), and has read and used the program workbooks.

