

VA Mobile Discussion Series

January 2019 Webinar: Meeting and Maintaining 2019 Health Goals with VA Technologies

VA's Mobile Discussion Series is a monthly webinar featuring a variety of topics focused around app development and mobile health at VA.

Micah Azzano: Hello everyone. Welcome, and thank you for attending our VA Mobile Discussion Series webinar. This month's discussion is New Year Resolutions: Meeting and Maintaining 2019 Health Goals with VA Technologies.

My name is Micah Azzano, and I'm going to run through a few brief technical reminders before we begin the discussion. Your phone lines are muted, so we'll be taking questions in the chat feature. The chat function is available to you at the right or your screen. If you're experiencing technical difficulties, please use the chat, and someone will be in touch to offer assistance.

Today we welcome Lynn Novorska, RN, MOVE! dietician program coordinator for VHA Office of Patient Care Services at the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and Kelly M. Ramsey, mobile app program manager at the National Center for PTSD, Dissemination and Training Division. If you would like to download the presentation, please click on the filename below the chat screen at any time during the presentation. The presentation will also be available at a later date on the VA Mobile Discussion Series webpage.

During our discussion today, our presenters will discuss VA apps and technologies, including MOVE! Coach and mobile mental health apps, including AIMS for Anger Management, CBTH Coach, Mindfulness Coach, Parenting2Go, Stay Quit Coach, and VetChange. They'll be taking your questions periodically throughout the webinar, so once again, if you have any questions during the presentation, please type them into the chat feature on the right.

With that, I'll turn it over to you, Lynn, to discuss MOVE! Coach.

Lynn Novorska: Great. Thank you, Micah. Hi everyone. Thank you for taking time to be on today's call. The MOVE! team wishes everyone a happy belated New Year. Personally, I always welcome the positive feeling that a new year brings. It's a chance to reevaluate and think about where you might like to make changes and create new habits. One New Year's goal that is frequently in the top five on many lists is a goal for weight management. If you've been considering that as one of your goals, then we think that the MOVE! Coach app is for you. It's a New Year, so start fresh.

It's easy for anyone to participate. In fact, we encourage family members and others to use the MOVE! Coach app to help and support veterans in their weight management journey. The MOVE! Coach app itself is a very comprehensive app that offers a 19-week self-guided program, allowing users to set goals and track progress. It is available for both iOS and Android devices.



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Here you see a list of some of the features found in the MOVE! Coach app. The first item is one that makes the app different than many other food and fitness apps that are available today. It's different because MOVE! Coach provides 11 specialized guides that are designed as educational sessions with built-in tools and calculators to give people guidance as they work through the app over time. It is more than simply a food and physical activity log because it teaches veterans how to set weight goals and how to follow those goals using self-monitoring functions that are in the app.

There are many educational videos spaced throughout the guides, along with some games and worksheets to help reinforce that educational information. The daily diaries that are available allow users to track daily food intake, physical activity, and weight, while monitoring their diet, activity, and weight goals using graphs and summaries that can be created.

The calculators are built in to determine calories consumed and calories used in physical activity. All entries in to the app can be used to create personalized data graphs and reports, which can be shared with a clinician, or with others using things such as Facebook, Twitter, iBook, iCloud, Bluetooth, Gmail. Or they could just be printed out. There really is no shortage of ways to share information with others if one chooses to do so.

Because we know that weight management is not easy, you'll also find some problem-solving tools to help work through common barriers and help with motivation along the way. For each of the guides, handouts and resources are provided for support.

Currently in VA, the apps can be used independently or with a clinician partner. Everyone should understand, though, that both iOS and Android MOVE! Coach apps are available for download and use by anyone. Any family, caregiver, friend, or others can use the app in an independent fashion.

But because research tells us that intense and sustained intervention is a big key to successful weight loss and maintenance, that's where the use of the app differs. To increase the app's effectiveness, MOVE! Coach can be significantly enhanced by incorporating check-ins with veterans. The addition of a check-in, such as a telephone call or a secure message, allows clinicians to monitor progress and provide support along the way.

This enhancement is what we have come to call MOVE! Coach with Care. We encourage veterans to ask their local MOVE! team if this is an option at their particular facility. If it isn't available in this fashion, then there are many other ways the app has been used successfully.

Here are a handful of inspiring individuals that have used the app with great success, having lost more than 50 pounds each. We have heard from many veterans that have had incredible, life-changing success with their weight management. If you're interested in reading their stories, you can access their stories and many more by using the link that's provided here at the bottom of this slide.



In each of the success stories, you can read about improvements, such as better blood sugar control, reduced or eliminated medications for conditions such as hypertension or diabetes. They talk about increased ability to do more physically, having less depression, and many other very positive life changes.

When reading these stories, you'll find that what works for people is very individual. Some veterans use the MOVE! Coach app very successfully independently. Others use it as a supplement to, say, attending their local MOVE! program group sessions. Some use it in MOVE! Coach with Care format, where they do receive those check-in calls with the clinician. Some facilities offer the app as an educational component for the Be Active and MOVE! program, or as a part of even their telehealth program. Even if veterans are using other food and activity tracking apps, we still suggest that they go through the educational components that are found in the MOVE! Coach app.

How can you learn more about the app? Well, there are a number of resources that we have set up for that. Because MOVE! is a fairly large app with a great deal of information, we did develop help screens designed within the app, so the users or participants can view help right on the screen, in context. It's one way to learn as you go through the app. What we try to get people in tune to is to look for the circled question mark or the small circled "i" for the information button.

There's also information on our public-facing MOVE! internet site. We call this the MOVE! Coach learn more page. That link is provided here on the slide. On that page, you will find information, if you should need it, about how to go to the help desk. There's help desk information and phone numbers, so that's always a good place to be aware of.

Other materials are housed on the VA mobile health training site. There you will find separate iOS and Android versions of a quick-start manual and a user manual. There are FAQ documents and training slide shows. Lots of information out there if you'd like to learn more about the app itself. I think we'll take a break right here.

Micah Azzano: Yeah, that's great. Thanks, Lynn. At this time, I want to take a minute and ask you a few questions on MOVE! Coach.

Lynn Novorska: Sure.

Micah Azzano: My first question is, I just want to confirm, can non-veterans use MOVE! Coach?

Lynn Novorska: Absolutely. I can't say it enough times. We encourage veterans to use the app in conjunction with other people being supportive with them. They can download it and use it as well, yes.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. You talked about the tracking and the users entering information. Will the information entered in the app be shared with anyone?



Lynn Novorska: The only information that's shared with anyone is information that a veteran would choose to share. There's no way for us to even get at the information that's stored on their devices.

Micah Azzano: Can you give an example of how a veteran might use that information, though, to support their health goals?

Lynn Novorska: Well, as I said, there's different ways that it can be used. Some of them do share it, so they may put the information into a secure message that they send back to the clinician. That's one mechanism. Another is that they may print the information out and follow. You know, some of us old-timers are still paper people, so they might want to keep it available so they can look at it differently on a piece of paper, or email it to themselves. But it's a way for them to be able to look back at the information that they can find in their app at any point in time.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Finally, if a user completes the entire 11 modules in MOVE! Coach, can they do them again?

Lynn Novorska: Absolutely. In fact, we encourage it. If you're continuing to stay motivated and engaged and it helps you to redo the modules, by all means. We encourage people to go back and do it again and again.

Micah Azzano: Great. Thank you, Lynn, for all the information on MOVE! Coach. I just want to remind everyone, we'll be taking additional questions at the end of the webinar, so please enter them in the chat feature at any point during the presentation. At this time, I'm going to turn it over to Kelly to go over mobile mental health apps.

Kelly Ramsey: Hi, I'm Kelly Ramsey. I'm with the National Center for PTSD, Dissemination and Training Division. I've been part of our mobile mental health initiative since 2012. Today I'm here to talk about some apps from our portfolio that relate to the theme of resolutions and health goals.

For your anger goals, we have AIMS for Anger Management. It's a mobile app that's based on the VA course, Anger and Irritability Management Skills. We built this with the involvement of the AIMS course developer Carolyn Greene.

AIMS is here to help with controlling your anger. The app user sets up an anger control plan in which they lay out their reasons and motivations for controlling their anger. Then AIMS then encourages the user to think through which situations make them angry, signs that they're getting angry, and then work on recognizing those situations and signs when they occur, so they can either defuse their angry feelings or respond to them in healthier and more helpful ways. The app also has an anger log for keeping track of the patterns of one's anger, educational readings about anger and anger management, and audio-guided relaxation tools, some of them specifically to deal with angry urges.



For sleeping better in 2019, if that's possible, we have CBT-i Coach, which is designed to support people who are in CBT-i, cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia. However, the app is really user-friendly, enough that we see a lot of what I would call off-label use for personal sleep tracking. Basically, a lot of people use it as a free and private alternative to many of the expensive sleep apps out there. It's safe enough for that. The app has received expert recommendations and media coverage for that kind of use, such as a recent article at NPR. In CBT-i Coach, the user can log their daily sleep. They can see their sleep deficiency and their sleep patterns on several graphs, receive bedtime recommendations, learn good sleep habits, and then wind down with a selection of audio tools.

Mindfulness Coach for improving your mindfulness or contemplative practice. This is one of our more popular apps. This is version 2. It has many new audio-guided mindfulness exercises, a weekly training plan to ease people into regular practice, a large amount of educational reading about mindfulness, and logs to set mindfulness goals, as well as general life goals. We have an update on the way. Some people have wanted a louder volume, because they want to listen to it without the earphones. That should be coming out pretty soon.

Parenting2Go for improving parenting skills in the coming year. This is based on the VA course, parenting skills for veterans and service members, also built with the involvement of course creator Carolyn Greene. Parenting2Go is specifically for those veterans and service members who are finding that they're in the habit of bringing military relational styles onto their children, and they want to work on better making the daily transition from work to a more supportive kind of home environment. The user can set daily reminders of ways to switch gears from work to home, track their supportive communication with their children, and use a variety of relaxation tools.

Of course, for quitting smoking, a perennial New Year's resolution, we have Stay Quit Coach. Like CBT-i Coach, this app was originally designed to support a protocol. Specifically, people who had quit smoking and other nicotine use with the protocol, Integrated Care for Smoking Cessation, and then want to stay quit afterwards. However, like CBT-i Coach, Stay Quit Coach has been adaptable to off-protocol use as a way to reduce or quit smoking, as a smoking tracker or smoking motivator. The user can list their motivations, why it's important to them not to smoke, and remind them to stay on course, and set up checklists in advance for how to deal with urges to smoke when they happen. The app also has education about smoking and smoking medications, reminders for nicotine medications, and some of our audio relaxation tools.

Finally, for drinking less over the coming year, we have VetChange, which is based on the VA's VetChange website intervention, and it was built with the involvement of the VetChange website's creators. VetChange is for drinking, whether to cut back or for abstinence. The user sets their daily and weekly drinking goals or limits, and then tracks their daily drinking to work on not going over their limits. Similarly to Stay Quit Coach, VetChange also has features for listing your motivations not to drink, and writing checklists in advance for how to handle situations which people might be in the habit of drinking.



We do have resources to support our portfolio, these products and others. If you are looking for more information about our apps for mental health, the National Center for PTSD website has an updated page listing all of our products. We also have a supplemental page we use to support all of our supplemental resources, handouts and so on. We do have a community of practice. It has a monthly discussion as well as a separate monthly continuing education series. If you're interested in that or support, we have tech support or other support, nonclinical support, or swag, please email us at mobilementalhealth@va.gov, and you'll reach our initiative directly.

Micah Azzano: Great. Thank you, Kelly, for walking us through each of those apps. At this time, I would like to ask that if you have questions for Kelly or Lynn, to please enter them into the chat feature on your right. I will kick off things with a couple of questions for Kelly. At the end of your slides, you have mentioned communities of practice. Can you expand on what's involved with the community of practice?

Kelly Ramsey: Sure. There's a monthly one-hour call for VA staff. It's held on the first Tuesday of the month, 9:00 a.m. Pacific, 12:00 Eastern. This generally has a presenter who talks about how they use mobile technology in VA healthcare and a general discussion. There's an email announcement list that we have set up to support that, that distributes the newsletter and updates on our mental health portfolio.

Micah Azzano: Thanks. Great. Then you also mentioned the education series. What can people expect to find with the education series?

Kelly Ramsey: That's also currently monthly, running on the second Wednesday. It does have CE credits. There's a lecture portion and then some time for discussion. If people are interested in that, how to register for credits, they can email us at mobilementalhealth@va.gov to get on the email announcement lists. Also, we post the session details as they're finalized on the MyVA app.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Going back to some of the mental health apps, what features have you heard about it being the most helpful to users, or are users most interested in, on any of these?

Kelly Ramsey: That's a good one. People like being able to personalize their products. They like having to be able to put in photos of their kids or their family to motivate them. Some people are really interested in looking at ways to view their data. One of the advantages we have is, like MOVE! Coach, our data are completely on the app, private. Nobody else can reach it. So people can become more engaged in trying to find ways to look at the graphs or look at their patterns of work. I suppose that would be a couple of the big ones.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Then I want to ask you a question I had asked Lynn previously, but with the mental health app. With this, there's some patient-entered data. How is that data used, and is it shared with anyone?



Kelly Ramsey: It is not. All the data are stored only on the app itself. They're not stored on a server anywhere, they're not transmitted off the app. As part of making a public product, just like MOVE! Coach, we're not allowed to, even if we wanted to go there, which we don't. Nobody can see it. It's only the person who has the app can look at that information.

Micah Azzano: Great. Now I want to-

Kelly Ramsey: We do collect analytics information that's very anonymized and split apart, such that we can't even tell if it's the same person doing it from minute to minute. We do have some analytics data that's transmitted that tracks which features in general are the most popular, for example, which projects do people spend more time on. But none of that has any way to connect it with any individual, anonymous or not.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Thank you. Again, I want to encourage you, if you have a question for either Lynn or Kelly, to please enter it in the chat. Lynn, I'm going to go back to you and ask you a question. The question I have is, can a user jump ahead in the MOVE! Coach modules if they want to see other information before they fully jump into it?

Lynn Novorska: You can jump ahead in the Android version. In the iOS version, which was our first creation, that ability was something that we, we wanted them to follow a more structured timeline, and so the iOS does not yet allow folks to jump ahead should they want to. The Android version, however, there is a mechanism for doing that if you want to open, say, a future module that has something of interest or that you're maybe struggling with right now. You can hold down on the module and it will open you for you differently than in the iOS version. It's a process. We've learned from people that they don't like to not be able to have access to all of it, so we changed things up when Android came out.

Micah Azzano: Yeah, you mentioned the Android versus the iOS. Are there any other differences in what users see on Android or iOS? And Lynn, after you answer, I'm going to throw that same question to Kelly for on the mental health apps, too.

Lynn Novorska: Sure. The app design is very similar, because we used all of the same content. But the screens do function a little differently between the iOS and the Android. It's actually much easier to show than it is to describe, but for example, the entry screens in the Android have something that's called a fan menu that opens up and allows you to select off of the fan menu. That's quite a bit different design than what the entry screens look like in iOS. The function in the end is the same. You get the same reports, but it does look a little different in how it's presented to the user.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Thanks. Kelly, I'm going to pass the same question over to you.

Kelly Ramsey: Yeah. There are some minor differences in the user interface that largely come down to, iOS does some things differently than Android, so in order to accomplish the same



thing, we need to have a slightly different type of control. But otherwise, the structure is identical. Which screen leads to what screen is identical, and the functionality is identical.

Micah Azzano: I did notice that some of the mental health apps are only available on one but not the other. Is there a plan to offer it on both eventually on some of those?

Kelly Ramsey: Largely dependent upon funding that we receive. Our plan, we'd like to expand all of our apps to have full Android coverage. It just depends on whether or not we have enough money coming down in order to accomplish that.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Is there anything, Lynn or Kelly, that you would like to add? We don't have any additional questions at this time, so if there's anything you want to add here, please go ahead. Lynn or Kelly? Lynn, I'll start with you.

Lynn Novorska: Sure. I guess the only thing that I might add is just to have people know that we're still working toward getting a third component to the MOVE! Coach apps. That is something that we call MOVE! Coach Clinician Connect. We have high hopes that we'll one day be able to sign people up and actually gather the data and the information, with individuals that are interested and willing to do that, to be able to follow them more closely in a clinical sense. Again, as Kelly mentioned, it comes down to funding. It's still on our to-do list, as well as updating various pieces of the MOVE! Coach app to make it do some things that other fitness and food apps can do, and we'd like to add on to the functionality. We're not going to stop. We're going to keep trying.

Micah Azzano: Lynn, while I have you, is there anything else with the MOVE! Coach that we should be expecting to come out in 2019?

Lynn Novorska: No, no. No new activity in that regard. Just continuing to develop programs at the facility level to incorporate its use, the use of the app in their programs.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Kelly, I'm going to ask you the same question. Any final words or thoughts you want to include? But I also have a question that just came in for you asking if you could tell us again how to join the Wednesday calls.

Kelly Ramsey: Oh, sure. To join the Wednesday calls email us at mobilementalhealth@va.gov. That goes to our initiative directly. That's really the best way to get in on the announcements of that. Then you'll receive, or you can sign up for the email list and receive the announcements of when those calls are and how to get CE credits.

I'd say overall, we are interested very strongly in improving our products and making them meet the needs of VA and community providers. If anybody is working with our apps or working with our services and they're interested in, maybe they've encountered something that they would like to see, or see done better, or they have a new idea for a feature, or they're running into a problem, you know, "How do I do this?" or they have a technical issue, again, we welcome any and all feedback, questions, concerns, to the email address



mobilementalhealth@va.gov. That gets you in touch with us directly. Tech support, you'd be dealing with me, feature issues, all of us, and so forth. We're very interested in helping people out and making improvements in what we offer.

Micah Azzano: Thanks. Great. I just have another question that came in. Are the same resources available on all apps available to veterans who don't have access to a smartphone or tablet?

Kelly Ramsey: If they don't have a smartphone or tablets, they do have alternatives. We do have some web resources. That's largely run not by the Dissemination and Training Division, but by other units of the VA. The AIMS web course, the Parenting2Go web course, and the Moving Forward web course would be places to go. There's also a few items, such as on the National Center for PTSD website, there is a PTSD coach online that has some online relaxation offerings in your web browser. That would be another alternative for working with that.

Lynn Novorska: From a MOVE! perspective, we don't have web resources, but we do have many other options of how MOVE! is provided to the veteran. So I would say yes, that it's available. It doesn't look like an electronic version of anything, but it might be a MOVE! group, or it might be a tele-MOVE! episode of care, that kind of thing. A little bit different than a mobile app, certainly, but ways to receive the care.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Thank you. I just want to give everyone a few more minutes if they want to ask any questions. While you're typing, I'm just going to put up our next slide. If you have any future topics you'd like to discuss or you want to provide us with feedback, there's a link on the screen that you can go and enter in some information. It's a very short survey. We're always happy to have feedback on how we can improve, or on what topics you would like to hear.

I see a couple more people typing, so we'll give them just another minute. Then in response to some of the materials that are available, not that are available online, and not just on the smartphone or tablet, some of our other participants have posted some resources and places where you could go for that information, too.

Okay, so I have another question that just came in. From the analytics that we've seen, are veterans seeking mobile first, or are they seeking out these resources on their desktop? Kelly, I'll go to you first with that, and then we can go to Lynn for MOVE! Coach on that.

Kelly Ramsey: I don't have any way to associate them with demographic data. We can get a sense that a person somewhere clicked on a button that led to a screen, but we have no way of tracing that to anything about that person, including whether they were a veteran or not. So unfortunately, we have to rely on things such as Pew surveys that come out on mobile use. One of the trends that we've noticed over the years is that increasingly, especially among people of the working class, that mobile-first is increasingly the trend. Broadband use is going down, home computer ownership is going down, and typically if someone has internet access, the



more common situation is that they first have a mobile device, and then maybe they have computer eventually. So a lot of what we've been anticipating is that for the people we serve, that we want to make sure that we support the most likely way that they're going to get their activity, which is increasingly mobile.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Lynn, do you have anything to add?

Lynn Novorska: Well, I can only echo the words that Kelly's offered. We just have no way, analytics-wise, to link the information, which is one of the reasons why I was making the plug a little earlier for that third portion for MOVE! Coach, because it would give us a much better idea, and we just don't have that capability yet. But it's a good question.

Micah Azzano: Yeah, that's an excellent question. Okay. This next question kind of goes a little bit out of what we've been talking about, but we have a participant who wants to know if there's an app addressing TBI. Kelly, if you or Lynn don't have an answer to that, I'm happy to circle back with that participant later.

Kelly Ramsey: We do have an app for mild TBI called Concussion Coach. That's available for both iOS and Android.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Thank you. That's all the questions that we have. I want to thank Lynn and Kelly for taking the time to present today, and for everyone for participating in today's webinar. Again, on the screen there's a link to tell us how we're doing and if there are any other topics you'd like us to cover in the future. I'll leave this up for a few minutes after the webinar has ended for those interested in providing feedback. We really appreciate your input, and hope that you join us next month for another VA Mobile Discussion Series webinar. Thank you to everyone for participating today, and have a great day, everyone.

Lynn Novorska: Thank you. Bye.

