Integrating Renewals and Correspondence

There are many ways to integrate benefits, from combining benefits applications to linking data across programs. In the same way that well-designed integrated benefit applications save time and burden for residents and caseworkers, integrated renewals and correspondence letters created using human-centered design are showing similarly promising results.

Several states are beginning to integrate their renewals and correspondence across benefits, whether in letters sent by mail, in online service portals, or via text messages. Other ways to integrate renewals that could happen with policy change include coordinating renewals across programs (such as "pushing forward" Medicaid eligibility by 12 months in conjunction with a SNAP renewal), and shared renewal verifications across benefit programs (such as providing a paystub as part of SNAP income verification and having that be accessible to Medicaid).[1] States that have gotten federal Fast Track waivers or utilized the state plan option can enroll people in Medicaid or renew their Medicaid coverage based on their enrollment in SNAP.

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1. Wagner, J. (2021, August 4). Integrated Benefits: Going Further With ARP. Hosted by the Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation.

This resource illustrates how integrating benefits renewals and correspondence may be feasible and effective in your state or county, potentially reducing administrative burdens for both clients and caseworkers.

In this resource, you'll find:

+ Information on how agencies are integrating renewals and correspondence to reduce burdens on residents and frontline staff
+ Ideas for using text-message communications to help residents understand renewal requirements

> "
>
> I've been shocked at how early the new [renewal] forms came in. They were sent out and next thing I knew they were in my inbox! I swear we normally spend a week of work [each month] just waiting for renewals to come in. Not with these forms.
>
> **MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CASEWORKER**
>
> From Project Re:New: Designing Simple and Intuitive Renewals for Michigan's Largest Assistance Programs

Lessening the Burden of Benefit Renewals

Following the success of Michigan's integrated and redesigned benefit applications, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services partnered again with Civilla to apply the same human-centered design approach to the benefit renewal process. After conducting in-depth user research with clients and caseworkers, the team piloted redesigned forms that made it clearer what actions clients needed to take, and by what date, in order to renew and keep their benefits. The redesign also pre-filled forms with information from the clients' case, and used the same form design across benefits (a core form with supplements that include the questions that are only needed to renew certain benefits, plus a "proofs page" that lists the type of verification documents recipients need to provide). The redesigned forms proved successful in the pilot, increasing on-time renewal submissions from 75 percent to 95 percent—and, important to caseworker workload, spread renewal form submissions throughout the month instead of the usual submissions spike near the deadline. The redesigned forms are now used across the state. Clients can also manage renewals online at the mobile-friendly michigan.gov/MIBridges site.
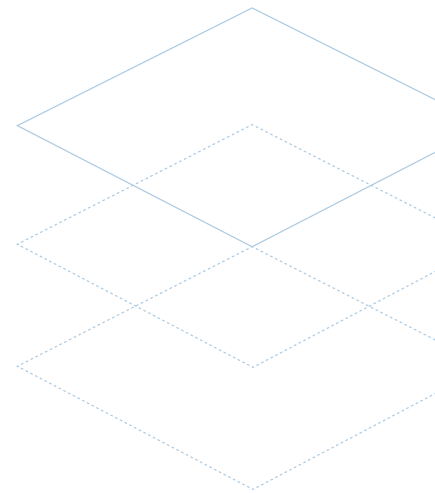
ⓘ **Find Out More on the Digital Benefits Hub**

Read more about matching and verifying data across benefits.

Household + Assets

Household Members
Confirm everyone who lives in your home. If anyone has moved into the household, list them below.

Relationship to you	Full Legal Name	Date of Birth	Does this person live in the home?
Self	Jane Doe	7/31/1980	(Y) N
Husband	Jordon Doe	8/7/1985	Y N
Daughter	Jill Doe	5/4/2001	Y N
Daughter	Jackie Doe	1/26/2003	Y N
Son	James Doe	9/4/2009	Y N
			Y N
			Y N

Does anyone in your household have a disability? ☐ If yes, who? [Name(s)] ☐ No

Assets

← This section is not required for Child Care (CDC)

Does anyone in your household have assets? ☐ If yes, list below. ☐ No

In the last 30 days for F&R. In the last 5 years for Healthcare and Cash

☐ Money + Accounts (Checking, Savings, etc.) ☐ Vehicles ☐ Property ☐ Sales and Transfers (sold, transferred, or gave away assets) ←

Who?	Type of Asset	Bank/Institution/Vehicle (if vehicle, include year, make + model)	Amount/Value
			$
			$
			$

Has anyone in your household received a federal tax refund in the last 12 months? ☐ If yes, list below. ☐ No ← Answering yes will not reduce your benefits

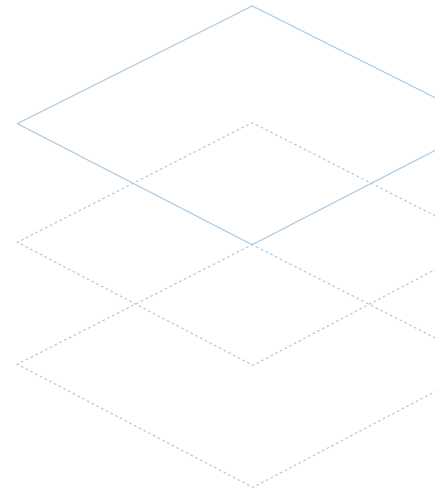| Who?	Amount/Value
	$

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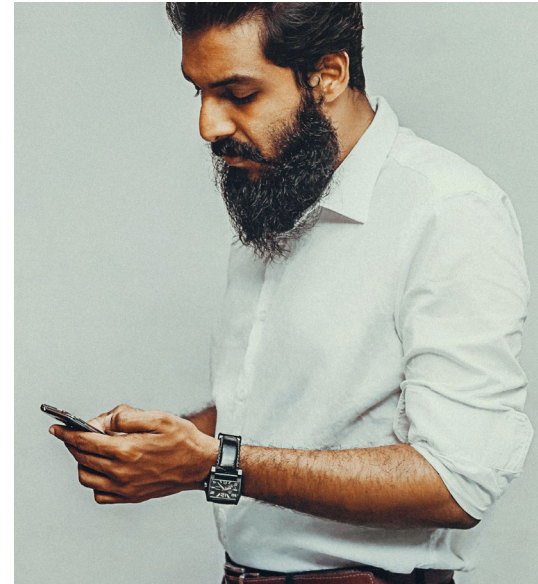
Example of pre-fill text for renewals. From Project Re:New: Designing Simple and Intuitive Renewals for Michigan's Largest Assistance Programs..

Notifying Benefit Clients About Needed Action via Text

After successfully piloting a 2019 text message service with a small number of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clients (in partnership with Code for America), the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services expanded its SNAP text message service to reach clients statewide in 2020, in response to COVID-19. These text messages, which include benefit renewal reminders, now serve TANF clients as well.

The Medicaid and Chip Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) released a report and focus group findings in 2022 highlighting Medicaid beneficiaries' communication preferences. MACPAC's report noted that many stakeholders had encountered issues with paper notices, which might be delayed and leave beneficiaries with little time to take needed action or provide requested information. For respondents who move frequently, paper notices might never reach them. Beneficiaries who participated in focus groups stressed the importance of having multiple pathways to apply for benefits and receive renewal communications. However, many focus group participants also shared that they would like to receive additional reminders via email/text. Given the importance of smartphones as points of internet access for many U.S. residents, and in particular younger, non-white, and lower-income individuals (see Pew Research Center 2021), text-message reminders may be especially useful for notices and renewal communications.

ⓘ Find Out More on the Digital Benefits Hub

Read more about large-scale redesign and small scale-redesign, as well as accessible content principles:

+ Starting Small with Human-Centered Redesign

+ Going Big with Human-Centered Redesign

+ Best Practices for Accessible Content

Read more about integrated renewals and correspondence in Michigan and Louisiana:

+ Project Re:New: Developing Simple, Intuitive Benefits Renewals.

+ Project Re:New: Designing Simple and Intuitive Renewals for Michigan's Largest Assistance Programs.

+ How Louisiana Rapidly Scaled Pilot Solutions to Combat COVID-19.

+ LA'MESSAGE Pilot: Text Reminders in Louisiana.

Read more about renewals and communications for Medicaid:

+ Beneficiary Preferences for Communications Regarding Eligibility, Enrollment, and Renewal

+ Beneficiary Experiences with the Medicaid Enrollment and Renewal Processes

Find other resources to learn more about integrated renewals and correspondence, including Civilla's online courses in human-centered design:

+ [Online Courses] Practica: Human-centered research and design; Guidance on Redesigning Applications, Renewals, and Correspondence.
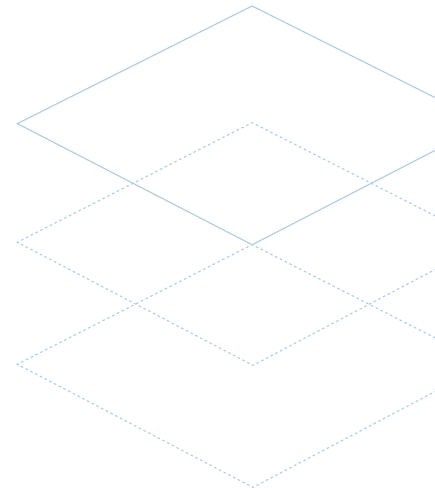
About this resource:

This resource is part of a larger initiative by the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University to document innovations in social safety net benefits delivery that are driven by human-centered service design, data-informed practices, and responsive technology. It also has the goal of spreading proven practices more widely. This resource was adapted from the report "Integrating Social Safety Net Benefits: Options for State and County Agencies Informed by Recent Integration Successes," written by Sara Soka for the Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation in January 2022.

Much of the content in this resource is derived from a 2021 workshop featuring government employees who were instrumental in their state's integrated benefits efforts. The workshop, which was part of a series on the historic funding opportunities in the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), showcased different approaches to invest in infrastructure, human capital, and projects that integrate benefit applications, outreach, renewal, and service delivery.
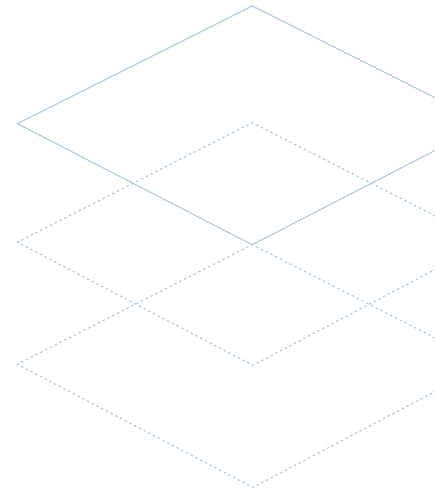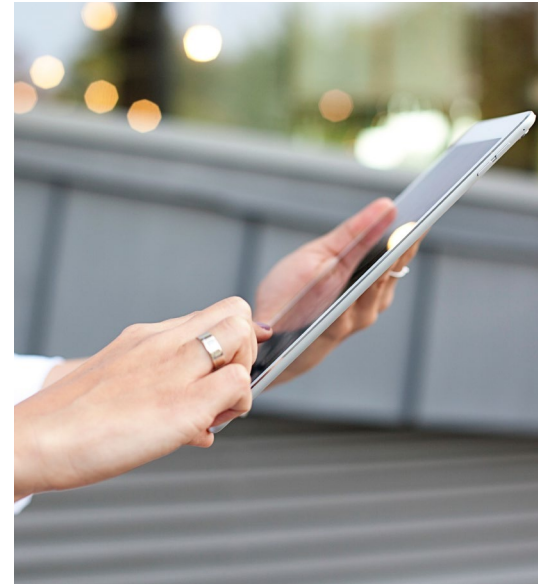
🖑 Get in Touch

Our Digital Benefits Network team is here to help!

Visit us at the Digital Benefits Hub

Please contact us with any thoughts, questions, or potential collaborations via email at digitalbenefits@georgetown.edu