

## Designing a Cost Effective and Flexible Staffing Model

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### The Issue

New York Medicaid CHOICE (NYMC) is a program that helps Medicaid beneficiaries in New York enroll in a managed care plan that is tailored to their families' medical needs. As NYMC's vendor, MAXIMUS was looking for an innovative way to ensure a consistently high level of quality customer services, manage costs for our client and provide a redundant backup to its core call center operations.

### The Challenge

MAXIMUS provides managed care enrollment services to 2.4 million diverse New Yorkers through our 184-member call center in New York City, running both consumer and provider help lines for NYMC. Maintaining a consistently high level of quality services to diverse audiences presents staffing challenges. High performance call centers rely on practices that ensure retention of experienced customer services representatives and the ability to meet fluctuating demands on service delivery levels. In addition, regional natural disasters and events that temporarily prohibit commuting to brick and mortar call centers highlight the need for alternative remote call centers. Business continuity planning is a priority for the state and NYMC.

According to industry sources, such as Gartner, Inc., more than 100,000 U.S. workers presently field customer service calls from home and one of every 10 U.S. call centers is likely to shift at least partly to home-based agents over the next two years. This shift has yielded desirable results for employers and their call center teams.

### The Solution

Our NYMC project piloted a virtual call center using home-based agents, starting with one agent in 2008 and growing the program to 30 agents in 2009 with existing scalability of up to 60 home-based agents with our current infrastructure. The home-based agents program offered the state a potentially low-cost, highly efficient alternative that avoided the issues of increasing lease space and labor costs. More importantly, the home-based agents program provided remote operational capabilities for NYMC.

Our home-based counselors worked full time. MAXIMUS provided equipment and high speed lines, while the employees substituted our office space with their home space. We leveraged technology such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) tied into our existing configuration of systems assets. Our technology solutions allowed us to monitor and manage the performance and productivity of our home-based agents, just like our on-site employees.

### The Outcome

The benefits of using home-based agents extended beyond cost-savings. The home-based agents program expanded the available workforce, reduced telecommuter sick leave and agent turnover (as low as 10%), and improved levels of quality customer service.

“Over the next two years, one in every 10 call centers in the U.S. is likely to shift partly to home-based agents.”

Source: Gartner, Inc.

## Operational Efficiencies Yield Results

Fielding calls with home-based agents has yielded measurable results:

- Lower operational costs
- Lower impact on operations due to weather conditions and illness
- Lower environmental impact, such as vehicle emissions
- Increased staffing flexibility
- Increased staff retention
- Increased productivity and efficiency in telecommuter workforce due to reduced travel time
- Increased reliability, responsiveness and ability to leverage technology support without expanding building space
- Increased energy conservation



In addition, the use of home-based agents has introduced:

- A scalable model to support peaks in call demand and unplanned increases in client inquiries
- Business continuity for call center services during facility-related interruption of services caused by natural disasters and other unplanned events

## Promoting Diversity in the Workplace

For many reasons such as geographic location, family obligations, limited mobility and disability, some employees prefer not to make a long commute. One of the goals at NYMC is to expand operations to be more inclusive and diverse by providing opportunities for people with disabilities to work from home. The home-based agents program diversifies the resource pool to include people with disabilities, veterans, older workers and people living in rural areas.

Augmenting our traditional brick-and-mortar call centers with home-based agents is just one way MAXIMUS provides both value and high quality service delivery. To learn how we can help you create a cost effective and flexible staffing solution for your program, visit us at [www.maximus.com](http://www.maximus.com) or contact us at **1.800.MAXIMUS** or [healthservices@maximus.com](mailto:healthservices@maximus.com).



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