

COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of July 6, 2020

In the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the country is seeing innovations in communities that highlight the best of human ingenuity. We highlight these stories to show how many are helping those around them, and prompt everyone to think about how they can help others.¹

Health Services Access for Vulnerable Populations

Telehealth for Vulnerable Populations

Throughout June 2020, the University of Memphis Telehealth for Vulnerable Populations [webinar series](#) presented six sessions for healthcare professionals, clinicians, and leaders of community-based organizations. The series covered topics such as best practices for delivering telehealth to underserved or vulnerable clients; setting up the home environment for telehealth; telehealth for school-based practitioners; and billing practices. The presentations discussed ways to engage caregivers and build rapport with clients virtually, especially when providing care to patients of diverse cultural or religious backgrounds.²

SURGE Outreach Teams

In response to rapidly increasing COVID-19 cases in South Florida, Miami-Dade County officials are deploying Strategic Unified Response to Guideline Education (SURGE) Outreach Teams to educate residents and businesses about COVID-19 safety protocols, provide information about COVID-19 testing locations, and distribute masks and sanitary supplies. SURGE Teams will go to neighborhoods associated with zip codes that have recorded spikes in COVID-19 cases. SURGE Team members include county employees, Goodwill Ambassadors from the Office of Community Advocacy, faith organizations, and community-based organizations like the Dream Defenders, the Circle of Brotherhood, the Coalition of Florida Farmworkers Organization, and Chamber South.³

¹ This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

² 2020 University of Memphis, Telehealth for Vulnerable Populations Webinar Series, <https://www.memphis.edu/fedex/events/telehealth.php>

³ 2020 Miami-Dade County, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez forms SURGE Outreach Teams in the wake of COVID-19 increase, <https://www.miamidade.gov/releases/2020-06-28-mayor-surge-teams.asp>



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Testing Access in Churches

In New York City, a collaboration between 24 churches serving communities of color, the governor's office, and Northwell Health aims to expand COVID-19 and antibody testing access for Black and Hispanic residents who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The churches provide space for testing; the governor's office provides general staff, supplies, and personal protective equipment (PPE); and Northwell Health provides nurses, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and phlebotomists. Residents can call participating churches to register for an appointment or wait in line, six feet apart and with masks, for walk-ins.⁴

Online Mental Wellness Sessions

To mitigate a potential increase in psychological distress among Native American communities as a result of social isolation and health and economic impacts of the pandemic, the [Native Wellness Institute](#) launched an online [Power Hour](#) for healing and wellness that incorporates ancestral teachings and traditions. These daily sessions have covered topics such as self-care, resiliency, and activism.⁵

Mobile Vaccination Centers

An architecture studio based in the United Kingdom (UK) has proposed creating 6,500 mobile vaccination centers to prepare for rapid deployment across the country once a vaccine receives approval. The mobile centers would be created from shipping containers that can be mobilized to public spaces (e.g., shopping center or sports complex parking lots) and relieve the burden from existing health centers. To minimize the risk of contamination, there would be a one-way flow through these centers, where patients would enter from one end and exit from the other end.⁶

Manufacturing Protective Equipment

A manufacturer in Pennsylvania working with the U.S. Department of Defense has been producing intubation cubes from sheets of plexiglass to protect medical personnel at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). These cubes will be used during aerosol-generating procedures to protect staff and adjacent equipment from potential exposure to droplets or mist carrying COVID-19.⁷

Technology for Remote Patient Monitoring

Remote Patient Consultation

⁴ 2020 The New York Times, Black and Latino Churches Offers Prayers, Hope, and Coronavirus Testing, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/health/coronavirus-testing-churches.html>

⁵ 2020 Fairfield Sun Times, Native American groups address mental and behavioral health as COVID-19 wears on, https://www.fairfieldsuntimes.com/news/national/native-american-groups-address-mental-and-behavioral-health-as-covid-19-wears-on/article_a312e412-ba7f-11ea-83f8-b35e630636c1.html

⁶ 2020 Dezeen, Mobile vaccination centres in shipping containers could immunise 60 million people in four months, says Waugh Thistleton Architects, <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/05/26/vaccination-units-waugh-thistleton-shipping-container-coronavirus/>

⁷ 2020 U.S. Army, Organic industrial base facility fields request for medical PPE, https://www.army.mil/article/236169/organic_industrial_base_facility_fields_request_for_medical_ppe

Hospitals in London, England, have been testing a technology company's [augmented reality goggles](#) to reduce the number of doctors exposed to COVID-19 patients and the need for PPE. During a patient consultation one doctor wearing the goggles can enter the patient's room and broadcast images and audio to colleagues outside the room via video conferencing platform. According to the technology company that developed these goggles, this device has reduced the amount of time staff spends exposed to COVID-19 by 83% in UK hospitals that have piloted this technology.⁸ In addition, with fewer doctors requiring PPE during patient consultations, the goggles can help reduce the amount of waste generated.

Remote Patient Health Status Monitoring

A device that was originally designed to monitor recovery progress in stroke patients has been repurposed to study disease progression among COVID-19 patients. This device resembles an adhesive bandage that attaches to the neck and continuously collects data on coughing, body temperature, and breathing. The Bluetooth-enabled device then uploads the data to a computer or tablet to allow doctors to remotely monitor a patient's health. Healthcare workers with high levels of exposure to COVID-19 can also use this device to regularly check their own symptoms.⁹

Technology for Adapting Human Behavior

Device for Limiting COVID-19 Transmission

In the UK, a teenager collaborated with a product designer to create a [watch](#) that vibrates when it recognizes gestures associated with hand movements towards the face, a potential avenue for virus transmission. Profits from early sales will fund the provision of free watches for vulnerable populations and frontline workers. The product team anticipates the watch will be released for purchase in September 2020.¹⁰

Software Updates Informed by the COVID-19 Environment

A technology company has introduced new software updates that are designed for behavioral and lifestyle adaptations in the COVID-19 environment. For example, a new smartwatch handwashing feature uses machine learning models to detect the motion of a watch wearer's hands and audio detection to confirm the sound of running water. A 20-second timer begins when the watch detects the start of handwashing. Additionally, in anticipation of the switch in commuting preference in large cities from public transportation to biking, a software update has introduced a biking feature in a navigation application to help commuters calculate biking routes or view bike lanes available along a certain route.¹¹

⁸ 2020 Bloomberg, London Doctors Use Microsoft AR Goggles to Reduce Virus Exposure,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-19/london-doctors-use-microsoft-ar-goggles-to-reduce-virus-exposure>

⁹ 2020 Government Technology, Engineers Design Device to Stream COVID-19 Data to Doctors,

<https://www.govtech.com/health/Engineers-Design-Device-to-Stream-COVID-19-Data-to-Doctors.html>

¹⁰ 2020 CNN, This teen invented a watch that warns you about touching your face so you don't catch coronavirus,

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/28/us/teenager-watch-warns-face-vybpro-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>

¹¹ 2020 Tech Crunch, Apple's software updates give a glimpse of software in a COVID-19 era,

<https://techcrunch.com/2020/06/23/apples-software-updates-give-a-glimpse-of-software-in-a-covid-19-era/>

Childcare Centers

During the earlier lockdown in New York City, a youth organization cared for more than 10,000 children of essential workers while avoiding the emergence of COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks. These childcare sites grouped children into pods of nine, each assigned to one adult. Because younger children may have difficulty adhering to COVID-19 safety protocols, social distancing and mask-wearing within pods were not mandated, but different pods were not allowed to interact. To encourage frequent handwashing at similar childcare sites in Arizona, children received stamps or marker doodles on their hands at the beginning of each 30-minute activity that they needed to wash off before moving on to the next activity.¹²

Locating Wi-Fi Hot Spots

The Michigan Public Service Commission and Connected Nation Michigan released a [map](#) that shows public Wi-Fi hotspot locations across the state to help those who urgently need reliable internet to support work, school, or telemedicine needs. The map also includes instructions for accessing networks at various locations.¹³

Business Safety Protocols

Highlighting Health Precautions at Movie Theaters

A movie ticketing application is highlighting the safety measures that different theaters are taking as they reopen to encourage theaters to market their safety protocols and help moviegoers determine which theaters to visit based on their own safety preferences. The application will provide information on over 100 theater chains, covering topics like auditorium occupancy, social distance seating, mask policies, enhanced cleaning measures, and special concession arrangements.¹⁴

Limiting Occupancy at Grocery Stores

Select grocery stores in the UK are piloting an automated traffic light system to manage the number of customers inside stores. A green light signal opens doors for customers to enter, but when the light turns red, the doors remain closed and customers must wait in line outside the store. This method of safely managing shopper volume is an alternative to placing a greeter in front of stores to count customers.¹⁵

¹² 2020 NPR, What Parents Can Learn From Child Care Centers That Stayed Open During Lockdowns, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/24/882316641/what-parents-can-learn-from-child-care-centers-that-stayed-open-during-lockdowns>

¹³ 2020 Government Technology, New Map Points Michigan Residents to Public Wi-Fi Hot Spots, <https://www.govtech.com/network/New-Map-Points-Michigan-Residents-to-Public-Wi-Fi-Hotspots.html>

¹⁴ 2020 Tech Crunch, Fandango adds new features to highlight health precautions and distancing in movie theaters, <https://techcrunch.com/2020/06/23/fandango-adds-new-features-to-highlight-health-precautions-and-distancing-in-movie-theaters/>

¹⁵ 2020 Independent, Aldi Introduces Traffic Light Queuing System to Limit Number of Customers in Stores, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/aldi-traffic-light-queue-signal-social-distancing-uk-supermarket-a9532586.html>

FEMA's Best Practice Initiative

There are extraordinary efforts nationwide to support personnel and resource needs to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA is working to highlight these efforts and encourage everyone to think about what they can do to be a part of providing solutions to help. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/best-practices> for more information.

Topics for the “Best Practices” series are generated from crowd-sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov.

For more information on how to help during COVID-19, visit [FEMA's website for information on donations and volunteering](#).

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