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## **MCH Innovations Database** Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance

# Group Connections Livestream Home Visiting Education

During the pandemic, the Turtle Mountain Tribal Home Visiting program implemented monthly group synchronous video conferences on Facebook Live that provide health education and support to families virtually.



Location

North Dakota



Topic Area

Telehealth/Emergency Preparedness



Setting

Rural



Population Focus

Perinatal/Infant Health



NPM

NA



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# Section 1: Practice Summary

## PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

When the COVID-19 pandemic began and TM THV had to discontinue its popular in-person monthly Group Connections gatherings, families missed the opportunity to connect with one another and learn from the home visiting team. Families were experiencing isolation in the community due to social distancing restrictions. Winter weather also made it difficult to hold safe outdoor gatherings or meetings during the pandemic. Additionally, TM THV identified a lack of culturally-appropriate educational videos on health topics, especially around COVID-19.

TM THV smoothly transitioned from in-person home visiting to telehealth when the pandemic shut down the community. However, families were missing the monthly Group Connections that TM THV normally provides in-person that bring families with young children together to share experiences, build peer support, and educate them on key topics. To address this gap, TM THV transitioned Group Connections to telehealth by providing monthly group synchronous video conferences on Facebook Live that provide health/safety education. TM THV collaborates with community partners to record demonstration/education videos and present those during live, interactive presentations to provide telehealth/education. Each monthly live video conference focuses on a relevant topic (e.g., COVID update with a nurse from Indian Health Service, proper installation/use of a car seat with the child seat representative, home safety with a firefighter, nutrition/breastfeeding with WIC instructor, positive mental health for families with young children with Behavioral Health). Because there is a lack of culturally-appropriate educational videos on these topics, the Group Connections program allows TM THV to incorporate tribal culture and heritage into the education to maximize its effectiveness in relating to TM families and incorporate local experts to gain trust with clients.

## CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Each Group Connection focuses on a different topic and seeks to provide two main benefits: 1. Positive engagement with other families and home visitors, and 2. Shared knowledge and resources. By adapting Group Connections for a virtual delivery on Facebook Live, home visiting families are able to connect with one another in real time during monthly meetings, and regain a sense of community during the pandemic.

The live streams deliver important information on relevant topics like proper mask wearing, vaccination, and mental health from local experts and allows TM THV to incorporate tribal culture and heritage into the education to maximize its effectiveness in relating to TM families. Families are able to ask questions during the presentations and receive resources from TM THV on the topics discussed.

In addition to the social support the virtual Group Connections provide, the resources and information help ensure home visiting families are able to remain safe and healthy during the pandemic and beyond.

### Core Components & Practice Activities



Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Planning	Preparing for each Group Connection call	Connecting with content experts, gathering and developing resources and content to be presented
Holding Meeting	Hold Group Connections meeting via Facebook live	Live streams deliver important information on relevant topics like proper mask wearing, vaccination, and mental health from local experts and allows TM THV to incorporate tribal culture and heritage into the education to maximize its effectiveness in relating to TM families. Families are able to ask questions during the presentations and receive resources from TM THV on the topics discussed.
Follow Up	Share any relevant resources requested by families after the event	Follow up with any follow up items/tasks that came out of the call

## HEALTH EQUITY

The Turtle Mountain (TM) Band of Chippewa Indian Reservation and Rolette County in northern North Dakota, just ten miles from Canada, is extremely geographically isolated and suffers from multi-generational distress. Turtle Mountain/Rolette has been repeatedly named one of the poorest counties in the United States (US). Designated a persistent poverty area from 1960 to 2010 by the Department of Agriculture, the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) reports Turtle Mountain median household income is only \$27,796 compared to \$53,046 for the US. Fully 21% of TM families live on less than \$10,000 annually (ACS). The Bureau of Indian Affairs Labor Force cites TM unemployment at 59.45% (2019). The Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) system reveals that Community Disadvantage Index of 10 confirms the area is one of the most disadvantaged in the entire US. The needs of TM families are tremendous, especially during the pandemic.

The virtual Group Connections program provides critical social support and health education to families on TM THV. Turtle Mountain is located in a very rural community and many families have experienced multigenerational poverty, trauma, and discrimination. The virtual programming allows families to engage with support who may not have otherwise been able to access it and provides content and education that incorporates the culture and heritage of Turtle Mountain THV clients.



## EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

- Cell phone distribution saw a 50% boost in attendees, and most of the phone recipients are now tuning into the Facebook Lives
- Virtual home visits have increased 12% since January, as families become more comfortable (likely in part due to the Group Connections)
- One client member mentioned the mental health meeting was really helpful and meaningful as they had just lost a close friend to suicide

## Section 2: Implementation Guidance

### STAKEHOLDER EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

TM THV has gathered feedback from clients, both informally and through follow-up surveys, to understand how to improve the virtual offerings and include topics and activities that are most meaningful to families and the community. This also allows home visiting staff to connect individual families with specific resources or contacts based on their responses.

The Virtual Group Connections program has also enabled TM THV to grow and strengthen partnerships with local providers, agencies, and community organizations. In order to bring relevant, evidence-based information to clients, TM THV has connected with several partners to present or participate in the virtual Group Connections or provide resources to families, include WIC, IHS, and agencies/organizations addressing suicide prevention, car seat safety, tobacco prevention, domestic violence, and more. This engagement has grown the network of care and support for TM THV families and created new relationships for program staff and leadership.

### REPLICATION

With the many viewers that we had through group connections, we had many programs wanting to come talk about their program or give presentations. We had speakers asking how we did our live event because they were interested in hosting a live event. So, we did have community programs that liked what we were doing and how we were hosting our events.

The only modification that would be suggested would be if we had more time for the project. We were able to purchase equipment through the AMCHP grant but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, shipping was delayed. Our program didn't get our equipment before we started our first live event. We did start the live events with the equipment that we did have.

Some lessons learned would be to make sure you know the policies of purchasing electronics. There are policies on how many cell phones that can be purchased at a time through department stores. Therefore, make sure to work with the managers and figure out about how long it will take to come in and if it is even possible.

### INTERNAL CAPACITY

Turtle Mountain Home Visitor's Director and coordinator worked through making contacts for equipment and ordering what we needed like supplies, equipment, and electronics. All of our staff (director, coordinator, and



home visitors) worked together to distribute the cell phones, cards, and accessories. We also had our IT and property supply department helping with finding the equipment that we needed. We did not need to hire any additional staff for this project. Our program staff organized the events and we would have a lead person completing these interviews. We would allow the speaker to give a presentation and allowed for questions throughout the interview. We made sure to complete PowerPoints to follow for the group connections which resulted in a better flow of the group connection.

## PRACTICE TIMELINE

Turtle Mountain Home Visiting planned on starting our live events instead of waiting on our equipment to come. We used the laptop that we currently had and had our own cellphones as backups in case we had internet problems. We started our first live group connection in January 2021. Our program got better with each event we completed. We took the beginning of the month to plan on what topic we were going to cover and then set a day and time for the event with the last 2 weeks of the month to complete the live event. We had held a total of 6 live events since the AMCHP grant started.

## PRACTICE COST

Budget			
Activity/Item	Brief Description	Quantity	Total
Equipment	Laptop, peripherals, Video Meeting Owl Pro with accessories, Apple iPad, Zoom license, camera, SD cards, tripod, recorder, Adobe Pro	Based on participant/site need	\$11,412.94
Supplies	Facemasks, hand sanitizer, alcohol surface wipes, thermometer	Based on participant/site need	\$1,708.60
Electronics	Cell phones, phone cards, and accessories	Based on participant/site need	\$35,757.76
Survey Gift Cards		Based on participant/site need	\$660.00



Internet	High Speed WIFI for one year		\$2498.75
<b>Total Amount:</b>			<b>\$52,038.05</b>

## LESSONS LEARNED

As we brought in speakers for the group connections, others throughout the community have learned the benefit of virtual group connections/presentations/outreach/collaboration. Our media provider, KEYA radio station has shared the live feeds for every month since January.

For live Group Connections, make sure that you have a backup for completing a live event in case of internet problems. If equipment or electronics need to be order, check with the stores to see if there is a maximum quantity of each item to be ordered. Also, to find out how long shipping will take and make adjustments if needed. Like for example, see if you can start the event with equipment that that you have to get the project going.

For Group Connections to be successful, a program has to allow for changes and modifications. Find staff that are comfortable with each role (speaker and organizer). Allow a chance for input from other staff.

Our program did run in to internet problems during a live event. The internet shut down during the event. We immediately started again with a cellular device. We made sure to be recording from 2 different sources.

Some suggestions for implementing a live group connection event would be to plan ahead of time. Allow sufficient time to gather speakers and information. Make a PowerPoint/presentation of the event so that the speaker and interviewee have something to follow. Also, most of the speakers requested questions ahead of time so that they could prepare for the event.

## NEXT STEPS

Turtle Mountain Home Visiting plans on continuing with the live events. There are many families that are not able to attend due to vehicle issues or weather that we hope to continue these live events. That way families can join even if can't make the in-person group connections.

Our program is going to practice more with our equipment (camera and software) so that we know more about the features that are available through our newly purchased equipment.

