



Health and Human Services Transformation Project

ACCESSMS



TITLE:

AccessMS Benefits Platform

AGENCY:

Mississippi Division of Medicaid AND
Mississippi Department of Human Services

CATEGORY:

Cross-boundary Collaboration
and Partnerships

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Mississippi, the Department of Human Services (MDHS) delivers benefits to one in every four citizens, while the Division of Medicaid (DOM) provides access to healthcare to more than 800,000 of the State's residents. In fact, approximately 64% of beneficiaries are clients of both agencies. Understanding these consistencies and to increase coordination, improve health outcomes and citizens' paths to self-sufficiency, and

reduce taxpayer burden, MDHS and DOM prioritized working together to develop a long-term

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vision for offering benefits to the state. The product of the State's vision is AccessMS (access.ms.gov), a dynamic web application that allows Mississippi citizens, for the first time, to jointly apply for many of the benefits offered by each agency. A first of its kind product in Mississippi, AccessMS has provided a common space where all State benefits can be offered, applied for, and managed, making Mississippi more accessible than ever to its citizens.

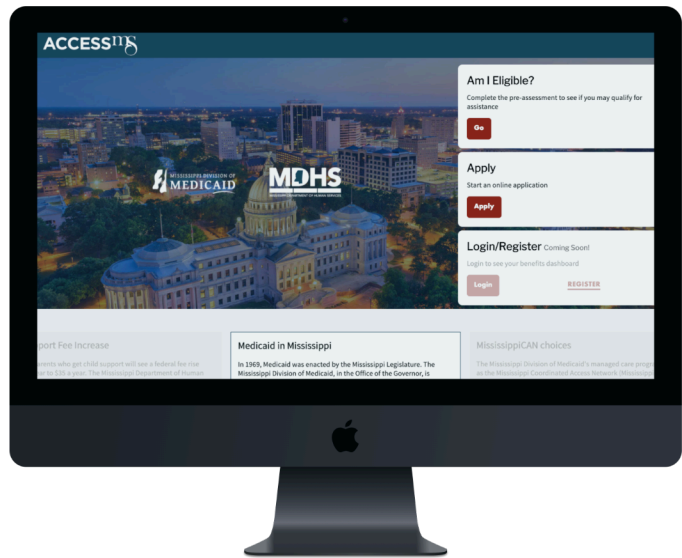
PROJECT CONCEPT

The Health and Human Services Transformation Project (HHSTP) includes two phases. Phase I, implemented in December 2018, consisted of two components; a pre-assessment wizard and an intuitive, shared benefits application between the Mississippi Division of Medicaid and the Mississippi Department of Human Services. By answering a handful of eligibility questions, the pre-assessment tool determines the benefits that may be available to the user at that time, eliminating the guess work for the user to know which benefits he/she may or may not be eligible for. The joint benefits application, the first in Mississippi, allows the citizens to complete a single application that is then submitted to the applicable agency of their choosing for enrollment in any of the four assistance programs currently offered via this platform. The benefits offered include Medicaid healthcare benefits, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and/or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).



Phase II of the project is currently scheduled to be completed in June of 2021. This Phase will consist of a User Dashboard that is tailored to each applicant. Through individual, secure accounts, the User Dashboard will not only supply applicants with valuable and timely information provided by the State regarding the status of their benefits but will also provide a platform for participating State agencies to communicate directly with applicants. The User Dashboard will allow for open, two-way communications regarding any additional information needed to complete the application process, will include the ability for the user to submit changes in their current circumstances, and will allow applicants to complete renewal/recertification applications, when necessary. All of which will be done without having to visit a regional or county office or interact in-person.

Additionally, Phase II will include a complete User Interface and User Experience refresh that greatly improves the citizen's path through the application. Because this application provides the user with the ability to apply for multiple programs, it is imperative that the user be guided through the process in a way that is intuitive, while at the same time providing the most accurate information to the agencies that are ingesting this data in order to determine the user's eligibility for the State programs for which they are applying. Industry standards for accessibility and user experience are the driving forces behind this update.



PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

Prior to the impacts experienced by the outbreak of COVID-19 in our country, AccessMS was receiving and submitting an average of over 7,500 applications per month (90,000+ applications through 2019). This adoption has occurred prior to any marketing campaign being released by the agencies.

Through the first 5 months of 2020 and following the outbreak of COVID-19, the service saw the average number of applications increase from 7,500 per month to over 30,500 application per month.

One of the goals of this project was to not only to simplify the application process for the State, but also to improve the quality of the information being gathered from the potential benefit recipients. In order to accomplish this, the AccessMS application presents the users with questions based on the user's benefit selection. This dynamic approach in presenting the application ensures that the user is never presented with questions that are not useful for determining their eligibility for the benefit they are applying for.

With Phase 1 complete, research has been done to define areas of improvement since the December 2018 release. The areas identified through this research will be addressed during the Phase II User Interface and User Experiences refresh, providing an even higher level of simplicity for the user while also continuing to

improve the data that is being provided to the State. In addition, by providing users with the

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ability to take charge of their State benefits through the user dashboard, users are now able to provide information to the State at their own pace and from their own home, without any inconveniences of traveling to a county or regional office. AccessMS provides users with this easy to navigate functionality, along with these innovative features:



Pre-Assessment Wizard: By answering a handful of eligibility questions, AccessMS determines the benefits that may be available to the user at that time, eliminating the guesswork for the user to know which benefits they may or may not be eligible for.



Joint-Online Application: This application leverages the knowledge that approximately 64% of DOM and MDHS users take advantage of benefits from both agencies by creating a one-stop-shop for Mississippi benefits. The intuitive design of the product tailors the application questions to each user by presenting only the questions that are required to apply for their chosen benefit. For example, if the user chooses to apply for Medicaid benefits only, the system will not

display SNAP, TANF, or LIHEAP specific questions. Additionally, the AccessMS platform has been constructed to allow for easy integration of future benefits offered by the State.



SMS Notifications: Users have the option to receive SMS notifications upon creation of their account. This feature alerts the user when they have received information from the State via AccessMS. This feature is an asset to the user who will receive a message when information is available, as well as an avenue for the State to connect with the user to request additional information, reducing the caseworker's time.



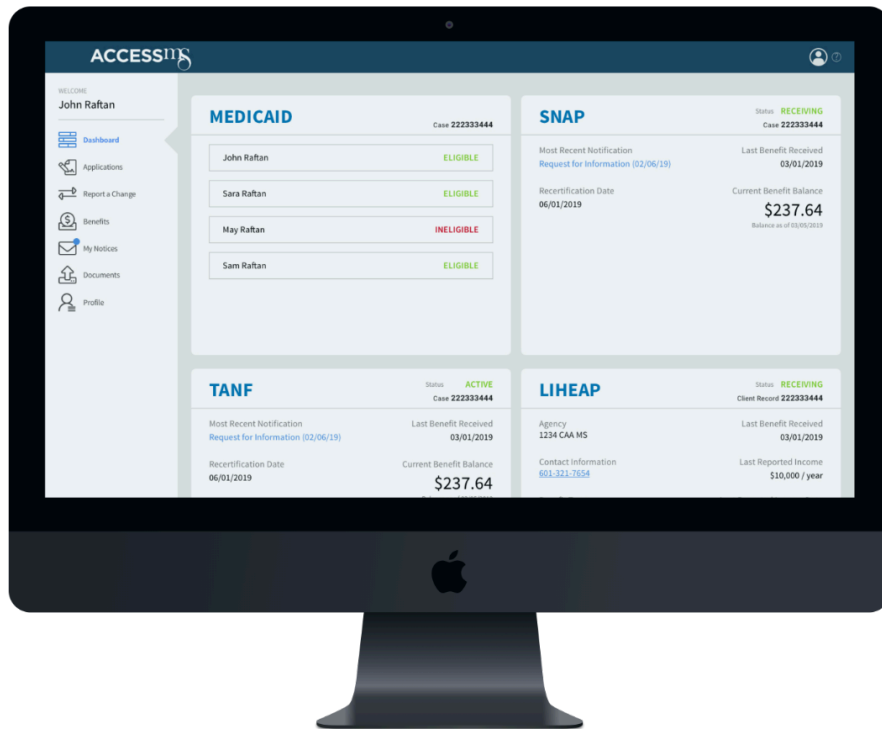
Mobile Experience: The streamlined mobile experience is designed to provide features and usability in a mobile environment. The application's home screen protocol adjusts based on the user's data connection to preserve bandwidth, cellular data and battery life. The simple menu buttons allow the user to navigate through the application, account login and user dashboard with only a few touches to select information.



User Dashboard: The cornerstone feature of upcoming Phase II is an intuitive and visually appealing user dashboard that is focused on empowering citizens of Mississippi to truly manage their State benefits. With the dashboard, users may view information regarding the status of their benefits, provide additional updates to the State via the document upload option, submit changes or updates to their information through the change in circumstance feature, complete renewal and/or re-certification applications when appropriate, and receive and view notifications from the State regarding their benefits. All these capabilities are offered to Mississippi citizens by decreasing caseworker interaction, allowing more citizens to be served than ever before.

Further, by allowing the user to create an account and then gain access to the user dashboard, AccessMS creates a cross-platform arena where the user can begin, pause, and restart any benefit related task, no matter where they are or what device they are using. AccessMS saves partially completed applications, allowing the citizen to return to the application at their convenience. Additionally, as AccessMS has been created with the mobile experience in mind, not only can the user come back to their application, but they can come back to their application via any Internet enabled device. Analytics have shown that over 72% of submitted applications have come from mobile devices.

The numbers are expected to increase with the release of additional capabilities in Phase II of the project.



PROJECT IMPACT



AccessMS has empowered the citizens of Mississippi by giving them control of their own benefits. For the first time, users are able to carry out the entire benefit lifecycle of completing an application, providing additional information, checking on the status of their application and ultimately receiving and utilizing the benefits offered by Mississippi, all while decreasing the workload of State employees which, in turn, decreases the taxpayer burden.

AccessMS provides this capability to the citizens by allowing users to complete many of the tasks that had previously required interaction with a State employee. Some of these tasks include:

- Providing additional information: Users can upload additional documentation to be provided to the State to help in the processing of their application. Examples would include driver's licenses, birth certificates, paystubs, utility bills, or other documentation.
- Paperless Notifications: The State can distribute notices through AccessMS directly to the user in real-time instead of utilizing the USPS.
- Fraud Prevention: AccessMS users are authenticated through LexisNexis to validate that the user is who they say they are and are only provided with information that they are legally allowed to see.
- Automated Functionality: Automatically closing or denying cases for failure to submit renewals/recertifications during the provided time.
- 24/7 Availability: AccessMS is available all day, every day.
- User Profile Services: AccessMS users are able to reset usernames, passwords, emails, and addresses without the assistance of a State employee.

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Since the launch of Phase I over 240,000 applications have been submitted via the AccessMS platform and through the connection between AccessMS and the participating State agencies. These applications are routed directly into the

agency databases without the need for the manual entry process that was previously being utilized, allowing the caseworker to focus their time on assisting and serving customers rather than documentation.