



# Piloting text message notifications for critical updates

Ensuring new families get critical, timely, and complete reminders and information during crucial early years.

The team designed and launched a prototype for a new Federal notification service, [Notify.gov](https://www.notify.gov) (now available in beta), to be used by State and local agencies that administer Federal programs. As envisioned, these agencies will be able to send text messages at crucial points throughout the benefits application and renewal process to help families know about, enroll in, and re-certify for the Federal programs that provide them with support.

For the first iteration of the prototype, the team has been collaborating with the City of Norfolk (Virginia) Department of Human Services to co-design a texting campaign. The end of the Public Health Emergency led to changes in eligibility rules for multiple Federal programs, including Medicaid and CHIP. In Virginia, the notification service will help thousands of Virginia families learn about Medicaid renewal deadlines and requirements to enable eligible families to maintain health insurance coverage.

**Collaborating agencies:**

HHS (OC, ASPA), USDA (FNS), SSA, Treasury (BFS, IRS), HUD, GSA

**Foundation:**

[Discovery Research & Life Experience Charter](#)

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**“ [Notify.gov] is the right fit at the right time. It’s user-friendly and gives us an opportunity to try something with support, which we don’t often get.”**

**-STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTOR**





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**“ [Notify.gov] is the answer to a thousand conversations we’ve been having– it’s what we’ve been asking for and needing. Pure excitement!”**

**-STATE GRANTS MANAGER**

## Piloting text message notifications for critical updates

### DESIGN PHASE MILESTONES

Milestone	Status	Notes
Established and developed agencies' authorities to send text messages for critical updates such as deadlines and program information.		<b>Completed.</b> Notify.gov is currently operating under a one-year pilot. Partner MOU agreements have been signed at both the Federal ( <i>i.e.</i> , FNS) and State/local levels ( <i>i.e.</i> , Washington DHS).
Partnered with a benefits program to send the first pilot messages via the notification service.		<b>Completed.</b> The team's first pilot partner, the City of Norfolk (Virginia) Department of Human Services, has been sending text messaging reminders about Medicaid renewals following the unwinding of the national Public Health Emergency.
Assess the success of the pilots and provide a deliverable of lessons learned.		<b>In progress.</b> The timing changed from FY 2023 Q4 to FY 2024 Q2. GSA's Office of Evaluation Sciences expects to conduct an impact evaluation of the Norfolk pilot to measure if introducing text messaging improves the experience of families during the Medicaid renewal process and whether and how it reduces interruptions in coverage.
Expand product features to help scale the impact of the notification service.		<b>In progress.</b> The timing changed from FY 2023 Q4 to FY 2024 Q2. The team is conducting interviews with State and local agencies at every step of the process to inform expanded product features, wraparound support offerings, and how to scale and sustain Notify.gov, the notification service.

### DESIGN PHASE PROJECT MEASURES

Design Phase Measure	Assessment Approach & Data	December 2023 Status
Percentage of families who opt to receive text messages.	Administrative data from Notify.gov on pilot participation.	Too early to assess.
Increase in programs utilizing SMS for the first time or a new use case.	Administrative data from Notify.gov on pilot participation.	Too early to assess.
Increase in follow-through and completion of benefit applications (and/or renewals) or other prompted actions, such as scheduling doctor's appointments, relative to those not receiving notifications.	GSA's Office of Evaluation Sciences plans to conduct a randomized evaluation using existing administrative data from Notify.gov and the City of Norfolk.	Too early to assess.
Decrease in administrative burden compared to those without the notification service.	GSA's Office of Evaluation Sciences plans to conduct a randomized evaluation using existing administrative data from Notify.gov and the City of Norfolk.	Too early to assess.
Improve experience measures such as trust and satisfaction with services in pilot populations compared to those not utilizing the service.		Too early to assess.
Decrease administrative costs for the government (reducing "churn" and re-applications).		Too early to assess.



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## Project Summary

The project will pilot a Federal notification service that will enable Federal benefits programs to use text messages (SMS) to send reminders and guidance to subscribers at crucial points throughout the benefits enrollment and renewal process.

**Customer pain point:**

Families need improved access to accurate and timely information while navigating benefits programs. Instead, some families encounter information and resources that are difficult to digest, mistimed, or unreceived. Application and re-enrollment timelines and requirements can be complex and mistimed; some never receive any information. As a result, some eligible families do not apply for benefits they are eligible for or lose them too soon.

## Project Objectives

The notification service pilot aims to improve the customer experience for families through better communication, reduce administrative burdens, and increase eligible families' access to benefits.

**Target milestones in 2023 include:**

- Evaluate and develop agencies' authorities to operate the notification service
- Partner with up to three benefits programs to send the first pilot messages via the notification service
- Assess the success of the pilots
- Expand product features to help scale the impact of the notification service

**Primary deliverables in 2023 include:**

- Pilot the design and launch the service
- Pilot metrics to evaluate the service
- Develop a synthesis of lessons learned during pilot

## Measures of Success

**Key outcomes:**

A successful notification service will streamline information about available resources and reduce the administrative burden on families navigating benefits programs. Outcome measures will include families' responses to the pilot notification (such as if they choose to receive messages and engage with them), whether program participation increases, and whether program churn decreases.

**Design phase project measures:**

- Percentage of families who opt to receive text messages
- Increase in programs utilizing SMS for the first time or a new use case
- Increase in follow-through and completion of benefit applications (and/or renewals) or other prompted actions, such as doctor's appointments, relative to those not receiving notifications
- Decrease in administrative burden compared to those without the notification service
- Improve experience measures such as trust and satisfaction with services in pilot populations compared to those not utilizing the service
- Decrease administrative costs for the government (reducing "churn" and re-applications)