

# Transporting Patients with Hitch Health

Redwood Community Health Coalition  
Promising Practice

## PROMISING PRACTICE OVERVIEW

West County Health Centers (WCHC) serve a large number of patients that live in rural parts of Sonoma County, and through patient interviews they found lack of affordable and accessible transportation to be a large barrier for patients to get to medical appointments. In 2018 they received a grant from the Center for Care Innovations (CCI), and began working with Hitch Health. Hitch Health describes themselves as, “an innovative software product that integrates any appointment system with any ride service to...remove transportation barriers and reduce no-show rates.” In short, it links WCHC’s EHR (eCW) to Lyft. Hitch Health handles the majority of the program operation, leaving WCHC with only minor issues like patient complaints.

WCHC sees this transportation service as a crucial piece to delivering high-quality primary care.

## AIM

To decrease no-show rates for primary care visits by using Hitch Health’s transportation system

## MEASURES

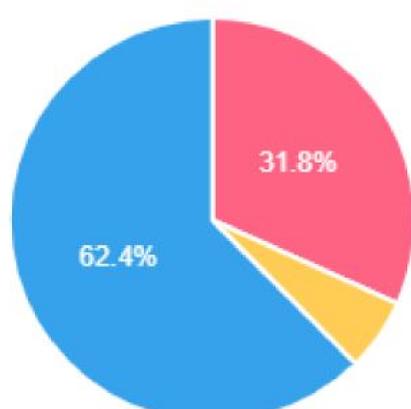
Measure	Number
Accepted Rides	636
Total Rides to the Clinic	388
Total Rides Home	342
Total Number of Rides	730

## Statistics from Monthly Hitch Health Report

### Patient Acceptance Rate

Total Ride Offers Initially Accepted	636	
Patient Canceled Rides	202	31.8%
Driver Canceled Rides	37	5.8%
<b>Total Accepted Rides After Cancellations</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>62.4%</b>

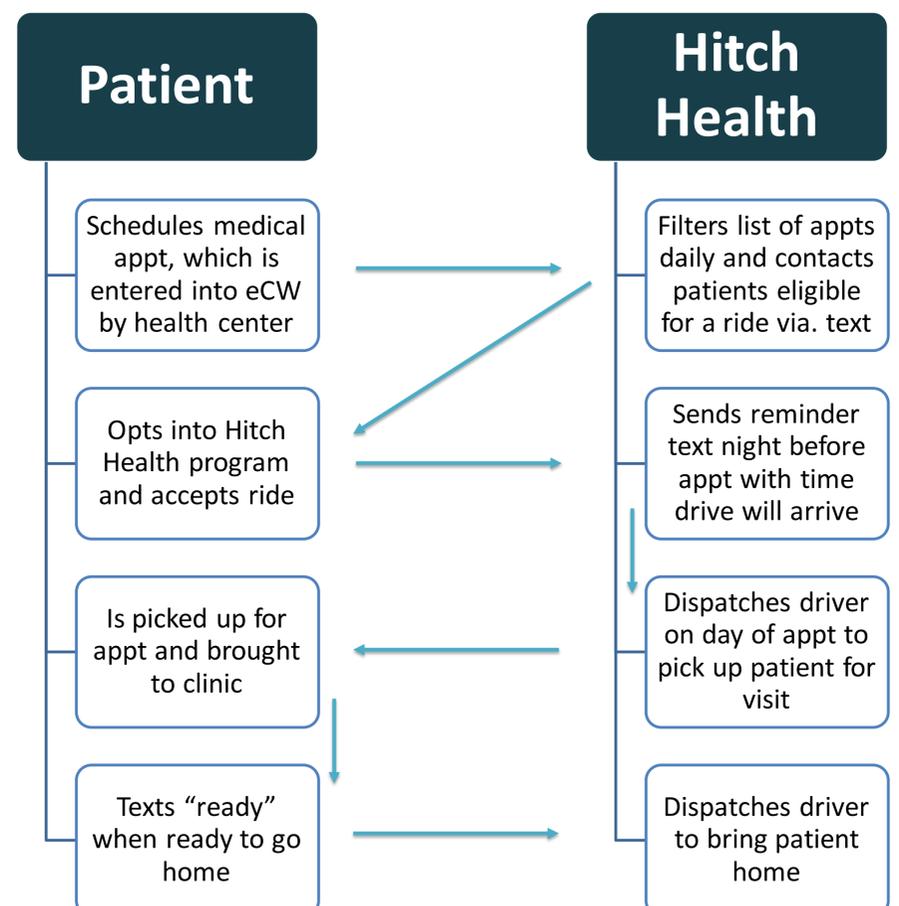
- Patient Canceled
- Driver Canceled
- Total Accepted



## ACTIONS TAKEN

- Attained grant funding to partner with Hitch Health
- Setup a BAA with Hitch Health to share select patient data
- Established a connection between eCW and Hitch Health software (Hitch Health connects with Lyft). CVS file uploaded to Hitch Health daily.
- Began piloting the service to medical and behavioral health patients at the Sebastopol clinic (Patients that don’t qualify for the program are offered taxi vouchers and petty cash. Note this service currently can’t be used for specialty care)
- Review monthly reports from Hitch Health with data on patient use of the service

## WORKFLOW



## RESULTS TO DATE

WCHC has already seen a drop in no-show rates by offering this service. The health center spends around \$1,200 a month for the service, which includes all rides (costing around \$9.68 each), ride cancellations (\$5 each), and the monthly subscription fee of \$200 per clinic. In November of 2019 there were 48 rides completed.

## LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

One of the most challenging pieces of implementation was training front office staff to ensure all staff were using the same terminology and giving patients the same message. Since the drivers do not know patients are participating in a benefit program, there is less stigma around using it. The patient does not pay any of the ride fee (including tip).

In the future WCHC would like to monitor health measures, such as blood pressure control, to see if there is improvement from increased transportation options. Ideally the service would be integrated into their EHR (eCW), however the cost to do so is currently prohibitive. The grant funding for this project ends July 2020, so WCHC is looking for additional ways to fund this service.



[Reports](#) / [General Rides Report](#) / View

Gravenstein Community Health Center\* ▾ Gravenstein Community Health Center\* ▾ 01/01/2019

– 01/22/2020

**VIEW**

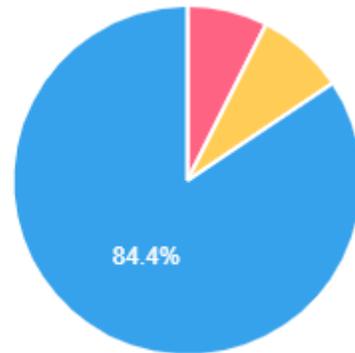
### Ride Offers

### Patient Acceptance Rate

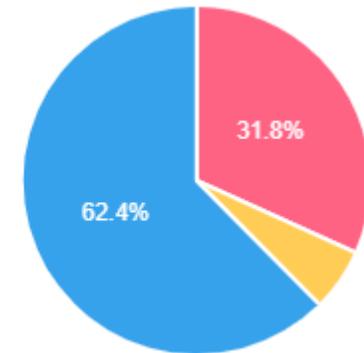
<b>Total # of Ride Offers</b>	<b>8552</b>	
Ride Offers Accepted	636	7.4%
Ride Offers Declined	700	8.2%
Unanswered Ride Offers	7216	84.4%

Total Ride Offers Initially Accepted	636
Patient Canceled Rides	202 31.8%
Driver Canceled Rides	37 5.8%
<b>Total Accepted Rides After Cancellations</b>	<b>397 62.4%</b>

- Accepted Offers
- Declined Offers
- Unanswered Offers



- Patient Canceled
- Driver Canceled
- Total Accepted



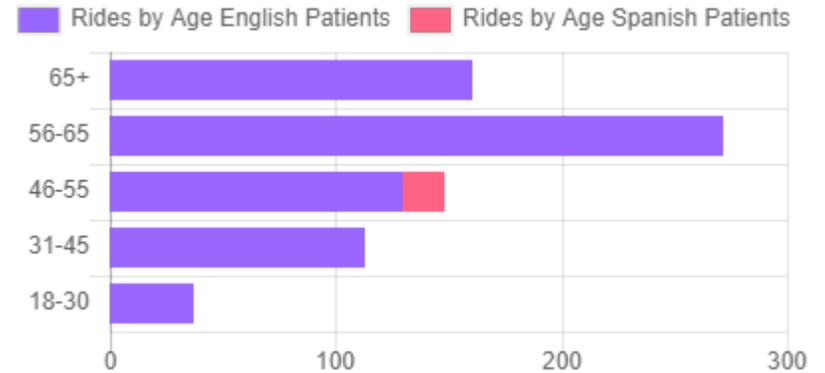
### Ride Offers

### Patient Acceptance Rate

#### Ride Activity

#### Patient Demographics

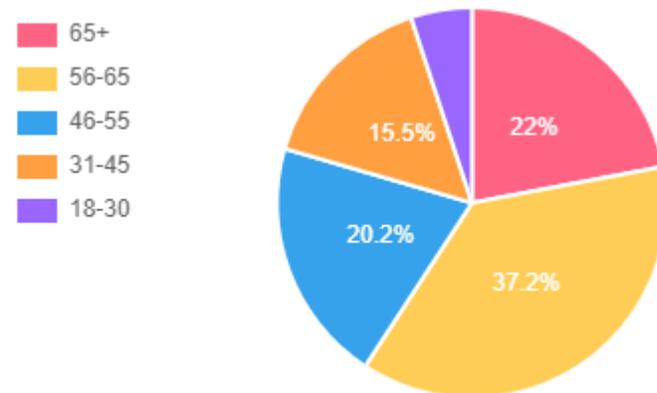
Manually Dispatched Rides to the Clinic	0
Total Rides to the Clinic	388
Manually Dispatched Rides Home	0
Total Rides Home	342
<b>Total # Rides</b>	<b>730</b>



#### Hitch Health Program Expenses

#### Age range breakout

Total # Rides	730
Total Lyft Expenses (Excludes Cancellation Fees)	\$12,446.27 98.4%
Average Lyft Ride Expenses (Excludes Cancellation Fees)	\$17.05
Total Lyft Cancellation Fees	\$205.00 1.6%
Total Lyft Expense	\$12,651.27
Hitch Health Revenue from Rides	\$1,825.00



### Ride Offers

### Patient Acceptance Rate

<b>Total Hitch Health Program Expense</b>	<b>\$14,476.27</b>
Net Promotor Score	9.8/10
# of Respondents	276

## FAQ's

### What is Hitch Health?

A technology that automatically initiates a patient ride offer through SMS texts using a ride-share service like Lyft when an appointment is scheduled.

**NOTE: Patients should never expect or rely on Hitch Health services as this is still operating as a pilot.**

### Who is eligible for the free pre-scheduled rides?

Patient eligibility criteria can be found below. Each morning the data team transmits a list of eligible appointments electronically. These appointments are 2 – 7 days from the date of the transmission. Patients begin receiving ride offers around 11 AM the day of transmission.

### Can I make arrangements for a patient who is not eligible?

Hitch Health Rides will be offered to:

#### Eligibility Criteria:

- Patient Criteria:
  - 18 years of age or older
  - Valid Cell Phone
  - Valid Address
  - Active (note marked 'inactive')
  - Does not have x42 healthcare for the homeless on problem list
  - Patient must not have opted out of initial dialog with Hitch app
  
- Geographic Criteria
  - Patient Address must be in one of the designated zip codes for the pilot: 94928, 94931, 95401, 95403, 95404, 95405, 95406, 95407, 95409, 95436, 95444, 95472, 95473, 95492
  - If the patient designates an alternative address while confirming the ride, the alternative cannot be greater than 30 miles from the clinic at which their appointment is to occur
  
- Appointment Criteria
  - Appointment must be Monday – Friday
  - Evening Clinic appointments are excluded
  - Appointment facility must be either:
    - Gravenstein Community Health Center – Med
    - Gravenstein Community Health Center – MH
  - CPSP Visit Types are excluded

**Can I make arrangements for a patient who is not eligible?**

No. At the present time, rides can only be offered to those who meet the criteria above.

**Where do I direct questions on Hitch Health?**

Staff and/or patients can call the Hitch Call Center at: 1-855-744-0014 for general questions about the program or a specific patient ride.

**How does the process work?**

1. **This is a pilot** and WCHC's Quality Management Team will only be sending specific scheduled clinic appointments safely and securely to Hitch Health.
2. Hitch Health's seamless technology triggers a patient ride offer via a SMS Text Message.
3. Patient replies "YES" to the text message.
4. The Lyft ride arrives the day of their scheduled appointment.
5. A text message reminder is sent the day before the visit reminding them of the ride.
6. After the patient's visit they reply "READY" and Lyft comes and picks them up and takes them home.

**If a patient is disabled, uses a walker or wheelchair, can they use the service?**

No.

**What if the patient cancels their appointment after they have confirmed the ride?**

The night before the appointment, the text message the patient receives states that if they no longer need the ride, they should text "no ride" to cancel it. It also reminds them that cancelling a ride does NOT cancel an appointment.

**Can the service be used for any other location?**

No, only rides to and from Gravenstein Community Health Center are included in the service.

**What if a patient asks to be taken to another location?**

Ride locations and times will be monitored on a regular basis. The ride is automatically designed to be round trip, non-stop, from one location, to the clinic, back to the original location.

**Will the Lyft driver know the patient is accessing a service through Hitch Health?**

Lyft drivers are not able to distinguish a ride arranged by Hitch Health or a ride scheduled through the publicly available application. The source of the request is not known to the driver. The ride experience should be the same as any other ride request.

**What if the patient is not ready when the driver arrives?**

Lyft drivers will follow normal protocol for pick-ups. They are mandated to wait five (5) minutes for the passenger, and then may leave. Many drivers attempt to contact the passenger and may do so, or they may wait longer than five minutes, but they are not required to.

**What if the patient does not have a cell phone, can they be contacted any other way?**

A cell phone is essential to the Hitch Health service, because messages are text-based. Patients must have a valid cell phone number, listed in the “cell phone” field in the patient record to take advantage of the service.

**What if a patient schedules an appointment on Friday Afternoon for a Monday Appointment, will the patient still get a text message?**

No. Our data team uploads the files of eligible patients Monday – Friday in the morning and with this process patients miss the cut off time.