

NEED HELP CARING FOR YOUR CHILDREN?

TextAZ Connects Families to Resources

(Phoenix, AZ - October 12, 2021) Arizona families can now access the help they've been looking for - just by sending a text message. TextAZ is a free text-message service that anyone in Arizona can use to find and access services for themselves and their family, including help with housing, food, transportation, child-care and parent support classes. TextAZ was created by The Collective Impact for Child Safety and Well-Being team to make the complex and often frustrating process of finding available resources non-judgmental, stigma-free, quick, and easy.

The team used state 211 data, focus groups and survey results to understand the frustration Arizona families have when trying to access supportive services. Families say they don't know the best way to get the help they need or even what help is available -- and there can be an overwhelming number of ways to access the services they need. Families report using more than one service across different assistance service providers, which requires having to go through intake and screening processes and provide the same information repeatedly. As such, people in need are left confused about where to turn for help and often resort to calling into various helplines, which can potentially result in long wait times for questions that may have quick answers.

The Collective Impact team collaborated with families and support professionals to create a text-based platform powered with natural language and artificial intelligence to help families quickly and simply identify and access the support they need. TextAZ uses a universal directory of Arizona supportive services and eligibility criteria as a foundation and then layers on a text-based communications capability. TextAZ uses one set of screening questions to create a customized package of services based on user, location, needs, eligibility and availability.

"Finding the help your family needs to take care of children hasn't always been easy," said Ms. Jones, the Head of Child Well-Being at the Sesame Street Foundation. "With TextAZ, Arizona families and social service practitioners now have one place to access information and benefits with a trusted advisor to help make the process easy. TextAZ will help families be resilient and strong."

Users access TextAZ by sending a text to "211" on a mobile phone with a question or request. TextAZ responds immediately using advanced conversational natural language that is indistinguishable from a real person. TextAZ can ask screening questions to identify what services the user is eligible for, provide detailed information on each service and then guide users on how to access them.

"We all have times in our lives where we just need a little help. I feel safe being able to access the resources that I need easily and anonymously. I didn't know where to start to get help for my family and didn't really know what to ask," said Arturo Sandoval, a father of three children in Phoenix. "With TextAZ, I was able to type in my information and needs and was instantly referred to resources that were exactly what I needed, and even some I hadn't realized were there to support a family like mine. In addition to these resources, I was able to get rent assistance and doctor recommendations. I feel like I can trust TextAZ."

To learn more about TextAZ and how you can access help for your family, just send a text to 211. Try it today!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) Valley Leadership

1. What are we building and why?

An advanced chatbot with conversational, natural language and a system for better matching families with services in the community. The goal is to help families get matched with the right services, answers to questions, and help based on their needs much faster and easier.

2. What does it do?

The solution helps families who need services find them easier and faster by reducing the “noise” that they typically sort through to get answers. It uses conversational AI and natural language processing to help understand the types of questions and requests and match them with answers, resources, and services. It simplifies the interactions families have by allowing users to ask for and get help with whatever mechanism they are most comfortable with - web, SMS, and voice, AND it translates those interactions to allow non-english speakers to interact with the platform.

3. What is the essential functionality?

F1: Chat Bot

F2: Trusted Advisor - guided search.

F3: Access to X universe of benefits.

F4: Built in screen to assess eligibility and best services to help.

F5: Anonymous and registered user capabilities.

F6: Follow up, process status, alerts.

F7: Natural language, cultural context, plain language.

F8: Local context/ terms.

F9: Multi-faceted.

F10: Drive help-seeking traffic to existing expert lines

4. Who should use it?

Families who need help, who are looking for services, who have a question and need an answer. Practitioners who serve families and help them find the right resources or services they need to be more resilient.

5. Why should I use it?

The solution helps individuals ask for and receive help faster and easier. The tool also helps practitioners better match services with those in need based on their requirements.

6. How will I use this tool?

Users access TextAZ through SMS based chat, webchat, or via voice.

7. What is this replacing, combined with or creating new?

The interaction with TextAZ replaces an overwhelming search, whether that starts with Google, a service-provider or one of many marketed help lines, and gives families a helpful place to start. It may also replace a call to 211, freeing lines for those with more difficult questions that need human support.

8. What data sets does TextAZ require and where will they come from?

TextAZ requires a list of the types of questions and requests residents ask or are likely to ask, and FAQs, resources, answers, phone scripts, or any other content that might help the chatbot respond with answers and useful information.

The foundational data will be a universal database of benefits and services.

9. What is the list of benefits and services included?

Protective Factors Framework - 5 resilience, social connection, concrete support, parenting knowledge, children's social emotional competence.

Build and own database, but start with 211 services database - top queries.

Access to non-judgmental expertise

Confidentiality

Follow through -- reminders and prompts to complete/continue/persist

10. What laws, regulations, procedures does this need to be compliant with?

Unlikely that these would come into play bc the tool wouldn't be collecting private medical or education data, but the possibilities could include FRPA, COPA, HIPAA

11. Who will own, operate and maintain this solution?

Collective Impact for Child Well-Being and Valley Leadership's Impact Maker

Affiliated with both of these the homebase could be within one of the collective impact/impact maker "member" organizations.

12. Who will pay for and manage the marketing activities of the solution?

Collective Impact for Child Well-Being

13. What is required to maintain the solution and who will be responsible?

Accurate services information - 211, Birth to Five Helpline, state agencies' or affiliated/funded service lines (e.g. Nurse Family Partnership enrollment line/s)

14. What applications does this need to be interoperable with?

The primary application TextAZ needs to be interoperable with is the Arizona 211 system. Others, include provider websites, see above (answers to #13).

15. What training does this require and how will it be developed and provided?

Training for providers: training webinars

Training for families: training webinars, family pilot groups through partners, “train the trainer” scenario

Training for a live human to help problem-solve and/or direct traffic from behind the scenes as the intelligence is learning

16. How much does it cost to build and maintain?

Estimates \$150-250k to build (approx year 1); likely year 2-3 refinement expenses \$50-75k per year; Years 4+ unsure about maintenance of tool over time; additional costs related to staffing, database connecting, marketing, etc.

17. How will we measure success? What are the KPI's?

TextAZ is likely to have a number of metrics for measuring performance and success. These could include;

- Adoption rate
- % of users had their needs met successfully
- User ratings/NPS: Pings to families who have accessed the tool with specific questions to ascertain if their need was filled; if there interaction with the referred resource was successful
- Utilization rates for existing expert/resource lines
- No disparities in data between racial and demographic subgroups
- % contacts in case management;
- # vetted providers, providers in the geography who are participating
- Response rate, how long it took families to find what they needed; if it was the correct resource
- Staff time is spent per inbound request; Cross reference 211 zip data; Level I call rates decrease, incoming calls generally decrease
- utilization rates by geography, esp mapped over Morrison Institute’s resource maps
- Repeat - same number multiple times + metadata
- Reduction in foster care entries.

18. What are the technical requirements and resources needed to use the tool?

Technology: cellular phone with texting capabilities, tablet, computer, Internet.

Documentation: user ID, account information (not 100% this is needed with confidentiality considerations).

19. How is my information protected by the tool?

Data privacy is essential to building trust. Customers can interact with the system to get answers, but Personally Identifiable Data is protected and isn't used for any purpose other than helping an individual get help (e.g. if someone posts their phone number for a call back).

20. What are the laws, regulations, standards this needs to be accountable to? (RE data/privacy)

This answer is not yet clear and needs to be investigated further. Valley Leadership' Impact Maker will convene a team of experts to determine all applicable requirements.

21. How are providers connected?

Targeted marketing campaign(s)

Driven to use through suggestion (or potentially requirement) of state agency and other funders

Participation in Collective Impact or Impact Maker

Coordinated outreach effort (targeting case managers in home visitation, school counselors and community liaisons, etc)

22. What is sent to the provider? Initially, ongoing?

User metadata

Traffic rates to their services vs. other like services

Most frequently asked or searched questions/services

Tool utilization broken down by different different categories (e.g. zip code)

23. Anonymous? Can a person use the service anonymously?

Personalization v. anonymous.

Yes, anonymously until the person chooses to self-identify

24. What data is collected? Can users opt out or delete their data from the site?

Need to have the functionality to collect data, but without it being a requirement

Yes on opt out and/or delete function

Ability to give the option to communicate/transfer info a user might enter over to the service provider they get connected to

25. TextAZ User Analytics

TextAZ user analytics will be collected and reviewed to inform performance and how the tool can be refined and improved. Examples of likely analytics, include;

- common requests, needs, keywords
- where traffic ends up being directed
- where requests come from (geography, etc)
- repeat utilization by single user

26. If personal data is collected, is there a memory of my needs?

Users of the application can opt to create an account in order to have a record of their searches, services identified and applications completed and underway.

27. What access do providers have?

The primary role for service providers is to ensure that information in the universal database is accurate and up to date. Providers can also access TextAZ use data to see questions and services users are inquiring about so they can improve service delivery.

28. How will referrals be handled and what information goes to providers?

TextAZ will provide a warm hand-off and transmit information only on user permission (possibly not at all).

29. How can users use the solution anonymously?

TextAZ users are anonymous unless they register and save information.

30. What is the role of the services provider?

Have effective, reputable, credible, accessible services available. Ensure accurate information exists about their programs and is easily accessible. Drive utilization of the tool. Be available when call for help comes (and if not available, policies and practices that ensure requests for connection/services are addressed quickly on receiving them)

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