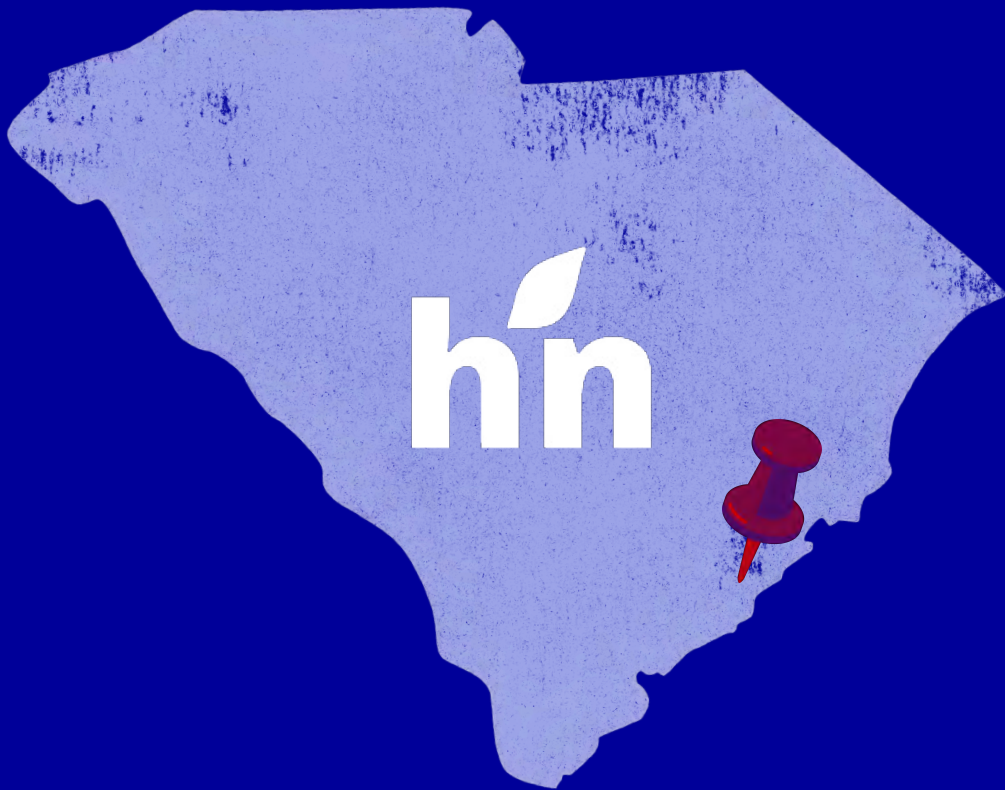


# Charleston's Collaborative Path to Diabetes Prevention

**How HabitNu's CDC-Recognized Umbrella Hub Model Built a Sustainable Network of Local Partners**



***From scattered efforts to a coordinated system delivering measurable results and lasting impact***

# Commitment to Sustainability: Strengthening Diabetes Prevention in Charleston

In Charleston, South Carolina, the fight against type 2 diabetes has been a steady, demanding effort. For years, diabetes prevention leaders ran classes on weekends, called participants after hours, and pieced together grants to keep programs alive.

Their dedication paid off for individuals, but for the programs themselves, sustainability was elusive. Without stable funding, the right tools, and billing systems, many programs operated on uncertain footing.

Margaret Peck, founder of **Healthy Plate Living**, put it plainly:

*"The funding was tenuous at best. Keeping things going was always a challenge."*

The problem is part of a much bigger national picture. 38 million Americans have diabetes, including 8.7 million undiagnosed, and nearly 98 million live with prediabetes. In South Carolina alone, 13.3% of adults have diagnosed diabetes, 35% are obese, and about 25,000 receive a diabetes diagnosis each year.

Without coordinated systems for reimbursement, referrals, and reporting, local programs struggled to expand their reach and build long-term stability.



## The Scale of the Problem

### **Nationally:**

- 38M Americans have diabetes (8.7M undiagnosed)
- 98M adults have pre-diabetes
- 125M Americans are obese, including nearly 20% of children
- 85% of adults with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese

### **South Carolina:**

- 561,200 adults (13.3%) with diagnosed diabetes
- 25,000 new diagnoses annually
- 35% adult obesity rate

# Challenges Charleston's DPP Providers Faced

## **Recruitment was inconsistent.**

The CDC-recognized National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) is a year-long commitment, making enrollment a challenge without a referral pipeline.

## **Payer rules complicated billing.**

Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial plans each had their own requirements. Without billing expertise, many programs either submitted incorrect claims or avoided billing altogether.

## **Compliance reporting was a strain.**

CDC recognition requires precise tracking of outcomes, payer data, and disability assessments. Most programs relied on manual, slow, and error-prone processes.

## **Financial sustainability was uncertain.**

Small grants and donations could not sustain programs long term.

*"Medicare billing simply was not in our scope," says Peck. "It was slow going, and sometimes it felt impossible."*

Margaret Peck,  
Founder of  
Healthy Plate  
Living



At the **Summerville YMCA**, DPP coordinator **Stacy Varvel** faced the same uphill climb. Her small team worked tirelessly to recruit participants and keep them engaged, but limited referral networks and the complexity of billing made growth difficult.

*"We had great programs and dedicated coaches," Varvel recalls, "but every year felt like starting from scratch."*



Stacy Varvel,  
Summerville YMCA

# Early 2024: The Umbrella Hub Arrives

Through a five-year cooperative agreement with the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, HabitNu introduced its **CDC-recognized Umbrella Hub Model** in Charleston.

## The model provided:

- Credentialing and payer contracting
- Centralized billing and claims processing
- CDC-compliant data reporting tools
- Recruitment and marketing support
- A technology platform connecting coaches and participants

*"We bring all of these sites under our umbrella,"* says Stephanie Watkins, VP of Operations at HabitNu. *"We handle the credentialing, manage claim submission, and the coaches continue delivering the program in their own communities."*



Stephanie Watkins,  
VP of Operations

For **Andrea Brooks, HabitNu's Billing Manager**, the improvement was immediate:

*"I work directly with insurance companies to find out why claims aren't getting paid. Most DPPs don't have the capacity for that."*

Andrea Brooks,  
HabitNu's Billing Manager



## Key Umbrella Hub Functions

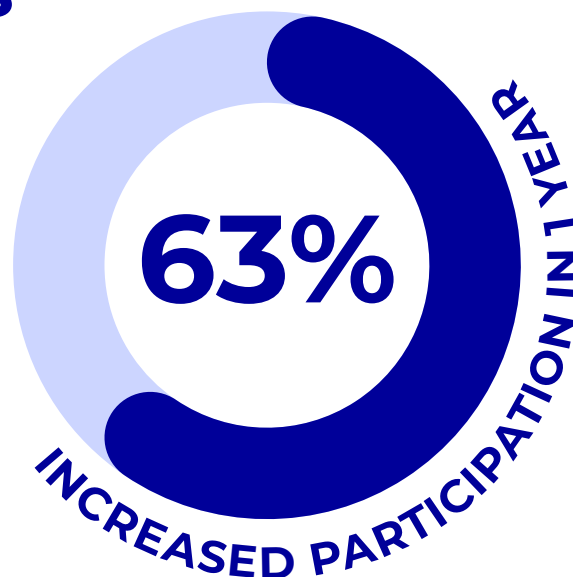
- **Billing Support:** Claims submission, denial resolution, charge integrity review
- **Credentialing:** Payer enrollment for partner DPPs
- **Recruitment:** Marketing materials, referral tools, and a participant onboarding portal
- **Technology:** Mobile app, coach portal, referral management tools, and virtual class delivery
- **Data Compliance:** CDC reporting with standardized data collection and outcomes tracking

# Operational Stability and Measurable Results

The **Summerville YMCA** increased participation by 63% in one year. Before joining the Umbrella Hub, it had no reimbursement revenue. Now, claims get paid and the program has a sustainable path forward.

**Healthy Plate Living** doubled the number of cohorts it served. 92% of participants completed the program, 78% achieved at least 5% weight loss, and 11% reduced their A1C into the normal range.

For **Margaret Peck** from **Healthy Plate Living**, the change was more than numbers. Years of juggling outreach, teaching, and paperwork alone shifted to working within a system where she could focus on coaching participants, while HabitNu handled the backend.



*"This is exactly what the Umbrella Hub was meant to do – remove barriers in billing, infrastructure, and SDOH that limit prevention programs from reaching the people who need them most,"* says Eddie Alvarado, CDC National DPP Director at HabitNu. *"In Charleston, we've helped turn fragmented efforts into a self-sustaining system delivering measurable outcomes and greater equity."*



Eddie Alvarado,  
CDC National DPP Director,  
HabitNu



# Behind the Scenes: A Digital Backbone

The Charleston Umbrella Hub runs on a connected digital backbone; referrals, credentialing, program delivery, claims, outreach, and data flow in one coordinated system.

## **Stephanie Watkins' Project Management & Implementation Team**

Guides partners from onboarding to full operation, integrating technology and workflows so programs can deliver the CDC-recognized curriculum without operational roadblocks.

*"We make sure nothing gets stuck," says Watkins. "From the first meeting to the first claim, we walk alongside our partners until their program runs smoothly."*



## **Andrea Brooks' Billing & Credentialing Team**

Handles payer enrollment, claim submission, tracking, and denial resolution. Every claim is coded correctly, sent to the right payer, and followed until payment comes through.

*"It's not just about submitting a claim," Brooks explains. "It's knowing exactly where it should go, what it needs to include, and making sure it gets paid."*

By taking on these functions, both teams free local leaders to focus on participants and outcomes.

# Tech that Keeps Providers and Participants on Track

HabitNu's platform connects coaches and participants in one ecosystem.

## **For Participants: Easy, Personalized Support:**

Participants use a simple, easy-to-navigate mobile app, also accessible from a web browser, to log meals, track weight, attend virtual classes, complete tasks, and connect with coaches. Personalized reminders and nudges match their engagement level, keeping participants engaged and on track.



## **For Coaches: Real-Time Insight:**

Coaches use a dashboard to track logins, class attendance, weight changes, and participant drop-off. The system flags issues early, prompts timely outreach, and simplifies compliance reporting. This insight helps coaches focus time where it makes the most difference.

Two-way visibility ensures coaches stay informed, and participants feel supported.

# Building a Stronger Local Network

The Charleston Umbrella Hub brought together six providers – **Healthy Plate Living, Summerville YMCA, The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), Phit4Lyfe, Círculos de Bienestar, and Wellness Five** into one coordinated framework.

Each provider kept its own identity and community presence but gained the advantages of shared operations, centralized billing, and integrated tech.

## Reimbursement expertise matters.

HabitNu's billing team manages the end-to-end process for Medicare, Medicaid, commercial, and supplemental insurers, reviewing claims, resolving denials, and ensuring no revenue is lost.

*"I work directly with insurance companies to find out why claims aren't being paid," says Brooks. "Most DPPs don't have time for that. That's where we come in."*

This financial backbone helps providers focus on participant engagement while building sustainable operations.



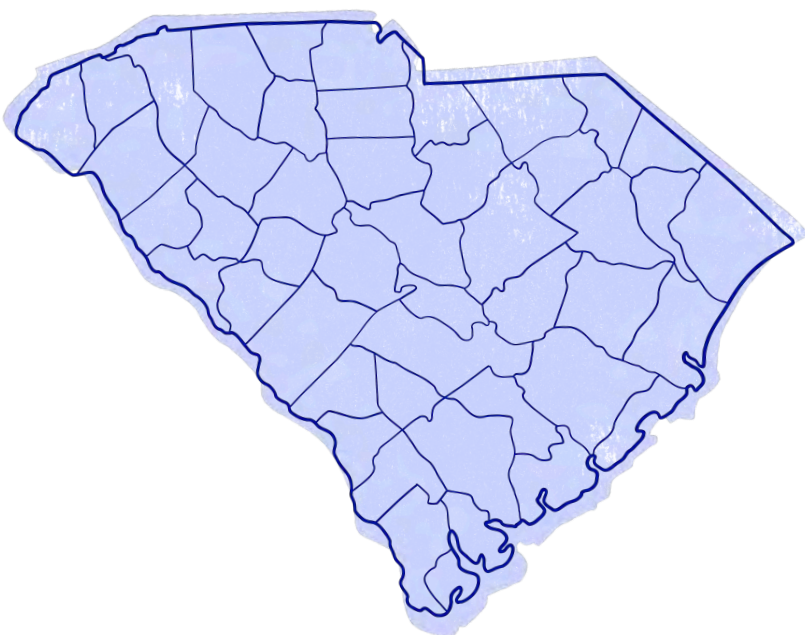


# Participant Outreach and Next Steps

## Unified Participant Outreach

Before the Hub, marketing efforts were scattered and inconsistent. HabitNu now provides unified outreach materials and a single onboarding portal. The portal screens participants using eligibility and risk surveys, then connects them to a coach and enrolls them directly into a class on the platform.

The platform supports virtual and distance learning classes, helping providers reach underserved communities who may not otherwise have access.



## The Next Step – October 2025

In October 2025, in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Health, HabitNu will launch the South Carolina DPP Class Finder. The tool has already proven effective in several other states. It will map every CDC-recognized DPP class in South Carolina, enable instant registration, and give providers and public health officials real-time enrollment and capacity data.

Residents will have one public access point to find the right program, whether in-person, virtual, or distance learning. Providers will track referrals, monitor attendance, and identify service gaps. State leaders can use the data to guide future outreach, funding, and resource allocation decisions.

*“The Class Finder breaks down silos and puts every diabetes prevention class in one place,”* says Stephanie Watkins. *“It makes it easier for residents to find and join the right program, and for providers to fill classes and serve more people.”*

# HabitNu: Building a Sustainable Public Health Framework for Diabetes Prevention

The Charleston Umbrella Hub shows what's possible when local programs have the right infrastructure, technology, and reimbursement pathways. With proven results and a model that is already expanding to other states, HabitNu is helping communities turn commitment into sustainable impact.

Our approach focuses on four pillars:

- Remove operational and financial barriers
- Strengthen community-based providers
- Deliver measurable health outcomes
- Build sustainable, reimbursable programs

The work in Charleston is only the beginning. The model now operates in nine states, with plans to reach fifteen. Each hub uses the same foundation – shared infrastructure, coordinated outreach, and sustainable reimbursement, tailored for local needs. With the October 2025 launch of the South Carolina DPP Class Finder, the network will be even better equipped to connect residents, improve referral pathways, and give public health leaders actionable data.

Together, we can build a national diabetes prevention network for every community.

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CDC Cooperative Agreement Number: DP-23-0020

*Funding for this project was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

