



# Delivering a Digitally Empowered Customer Experience Center to Enhance CDC Communications

CDC-INFO is an important component of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s emergency response communication infrastructure. By offering a variety of communication channels including phone, email, mail and chat to help citizens find the latest, reliable, and science-based health information on more than 750 health topics, CDC-INFO supports the public during emergencies with agents and extended hours as needed. CDC-INFO has provided support for a variety of emergency response situations including Ebola, Zika Virus, COVID-19, and a variety of foodborne outbreaks.

## Challenge

When the COVID-19 outbreak required the CDC to activate a surge and scalability plan, the agency tasked its trusted technology and digitally enabled customer experience partner, Maximus to initiate a surge state. Overall contact center volumes steadily increased by 130% during the first few months of the health crisis and ultimately peaked at a call volume of more than 222,000 calls in March 2020 along with an email volume increase of more than 90% above normal levels. The CDC needed a partner who would efficiently and effectively onboard surge agents to the program and scale its intelligence virtual response technology with a minimum impact to the expected level of customer service the nation's citizens were already used to. The contact center partner needed to be nimble, scalable, and highly expert in managing high surge volumes with proven omnichannel, automation, and messaging solutions to truly deliver a human-centered experience.

## Services Provided:

- Using real time data and call analytics to better identify trends and improve customer satisfaction
- Developing digitally enabled system enhancements to improve communications of accurate, timely, and consistent health information
- Building trust between the agency and its constituents through excellent customer service and improved customer experience



## Success Achieved:

- Reduced call-related costs by \$6M
- Operated with a 99% Average Customer Satisfaction Score
- Delivered 2.5M SMS Texts & 550,000+ WhatsApp Messages
- Received high overall customer service scores including: 85% rating for phone contacts, 95% for answer rate, 100% for correspondence (email chat and postal), and overall CSAT of 86.4%



## Approach

The CDC directed Maximus to expand services to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and expand its live contact center staff by 400 surge agents. At the height of the surge (March – April 2020), Maximus on-boarded more than 500 FTEs (front-line and support staff) which was an increase of more than 10 times the normal amount. Upon activation of the surge plan, Maximus worked with the CDC to form a Surge Response Team (SRT) to coordinate and manage surge processes and tasks. This plan was based on previous exercises conducted by Maximus and the CDC prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in preparation for any pandemic or health crisis. The SRT included representatives from each of the critical functional areas in CDC-INFO. At the onset of the COVID-19 surge, Maximus increased its call center footprint from two to five locations with a total headcount surpassing 600 FTEs.

The Maximus team of experts:

- Leveraged innovative data insights to deliver more effective results from daily operations
- Established weekly surge and quality overviews, and bi-weekly training meetings increasing agent productivity by 5%
- Delivered industry-leading technology solutions including queue monitoring and computer telephony, customer relationship management and content management systems, secure virtual desktops for remote staff, video and audio recording and quality management systems, program documentation management, TTY/TDD applications and call manager systems
- Provided relevant response content for rapidly changing circumstances for optimal agent use
- Communicated timely and consistent information across all parts of the business

## Results

Through its partnership with Maximus, CDC-INFO was able to increase its staffing level more than 600 FTEs (1,000% increase) needed to provide the levels of satisfaction our nation's citizen's demand. With adjusted communication protocols and a work-from-home environment, staff morale increased due to new opportunities for steady-state staff and new skill adoption that often led to promotion. Because of the established CDC surge quality assurance team, CDC-INFO provided timely feedback to agents, identified the need to train supervisors on an industry leading coaching tool and provided follow-up training.

Maximus was able to exceed the project goals during an existential public health event for our nation and ensure consistency in services. Together with the CDC INFO team, Maximus was honored with the 2021 Service to the Citizen Award, as a champion of change for demonstrating excellence in delivering services that impact the public's lives and rebuild trust in government.

We can empower you to innovate with agility and scale, delivering impactful outcomes and exceptional customer experiences. Learn more at [maximus.com/federal-health](https://www.maximus.com/federal-health).

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