**Through Koda,
an Oregon-based nonprofit
successfully engages Unhoused Individuals
in comprehensive Advance Care Planning.**

Overview

The Peaceful Presence Project (TPPP), a nonprofit collective of End-of-Life doulas in central Oregon approached Koda Health with a desire to bring digital Advance Care Planning to the unhoused community of Central Oregon. Despite this population's unique challenges and needs, the flexibility of Koda's ACP experience allowed for several innovations and adjustments tailored to the unique challenges and needs of this population.

This allowed TPPP's cohort of volunteers to successfully support over 60 unhoused community members through ACP from June-September of 2022 - far exceeding outcomes of health systems in their region. This partnership was so successful that its scope was expanded into more rural counties for 2023.

Participant Testimonial

Thanks for listening to my story. It helps to talk. And I liked the videos and information given about my care options. I would have never done this alone. But I have no regrets about taking the time to do it now. It seems necessary with my complicated health history.

The Major Challenges

ACP is rarely offered despite the need.

Homeless populations experience dismal health outcomes, significantly worse than the general population. Their average life expectancy ranges between 42-52 years of age, and they face a mortality rate 3-4 times higher than that of the average American. However, health systems typically offer ACP only to adults aged 65 and above, leaving the unhoused without access to this critical service.

The Hearing their Voice pilot program in Los Angeles (Meyer, 2019) discovered that "very few homeless participants are inquired about advance care planning." This communication gap results in homeless participants receiving aggressive care until a decision-maker, who may not have spoken to the patient for months or years, can be located.

Paper ACP forms have limited effectiveness.

Using a paper form to facilitate ACP) is a conventional approach, but it has become antiquated and ineffective in delivering this service. Participants often find the forms burdensome and daunting, as they contain complex medical terminology and lack sufficient explanations. Moreover, participants usually face an unassisted completion process, without any support. Even if a patient successfully completes their paper ACP, the document is seldom shared, rendering it useless.

> **Participant Testimonial**
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> **I have been close to death many times. I get why advance care planning matters. It's good to know my girlfriend can speak for me in the case that I can't communicate for myself. They've handed me those advance directive packets at the hospital but it's always really complicated. I can't do this independently. This process was easy and really necessary.**

Process complexities specific to Oregon.

There are various challenges associated with completing ACP in this particular population. In Oregon, the absence of an e-signature option necessitates additional in-person steps to legalize these plans. Moreover, obtaining the signature of a reliable Medical Decision Maker (MDM) is necessary for legalization; however, homelessness often results in a lack of a dependable MDM. Furthermore, the instability associated with homelessness results in fragmented care. People experiencing homelessness frequently struggle to secure consistent healthcare and may not have a continuous medical history with a single primary care provider or health system.

The Solution

TPPP's cohort of volunteers visited sites where unhoused individuals would frequent. They utilized Koda's ACP Experience to facilitate thoughtful and engaging planning for this population. While Koda's base platform solved many of the challenges listed above, there were innovations suggested and implemented to solve the few remaining problems. Read more about the specifics below.

Koda's Experience Eliminates Many Aforementioned Obstacles.

Our digital ACP experience equipped TPPP with the tools it needed to effectively engage its community members.

- The platform is optimized for low-tech environments - all that's needed is an internet-connected device.

- Our medical education team curated a thoughtful and engaging curriculum that simplifies and thoroughly educates users about the complex medical decisions within an ACP.

- The provider/administrator experience is clear and easy to navigate with dedicated support from Koda if problems arise. This allows volunteers to easily facilitate the planning process; focusing on supporting participants not troubleshooting tech.

- The digital storage of the ACPs allows for easy sharing and communication with healthcare organizations.

Koda and TPPP developed Innovative Fixes for the In-Person Problems.

Koda's product and customer success team worked with TPPP to solve the few obstacles that Koda's base product couldn't address.

1. The development of a Koda identification badge, indicating that the holder had a completed ACP and the steps to access said plan.

2. Recorded training to allow for a scalable way to continue to train volunteers and new TPPP members.

3. TPPP's incentive to bring participants to the table. Because of the negative association with ACP as a burdensome, confusing paper-based process - many were hesitant. A small incentive brought them to the table, with many participants remarking that the ACP experience ended up being more valuable than the incentive itself.
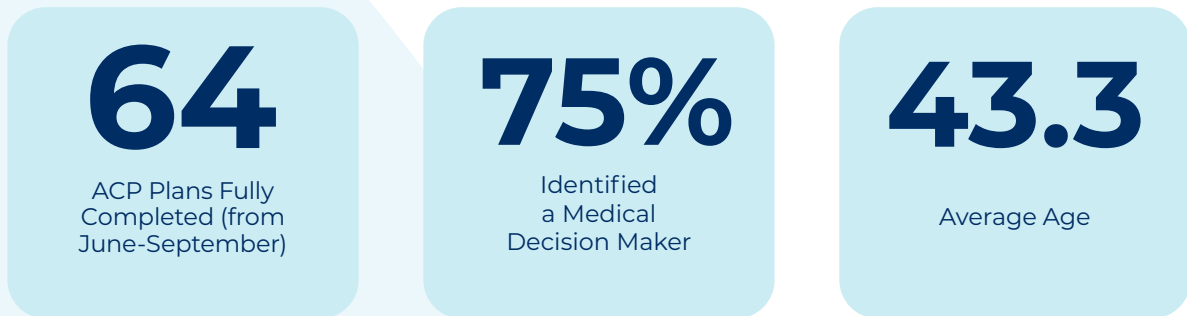
> **Participant Testimonial**
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> **The gift card is the thing that attracted me to doing an AD. But once I completed the process with Elizabeth I realized it was something I should have done a long time ago. I brought my partner and a couple of other family members back next week to do their ADs.**
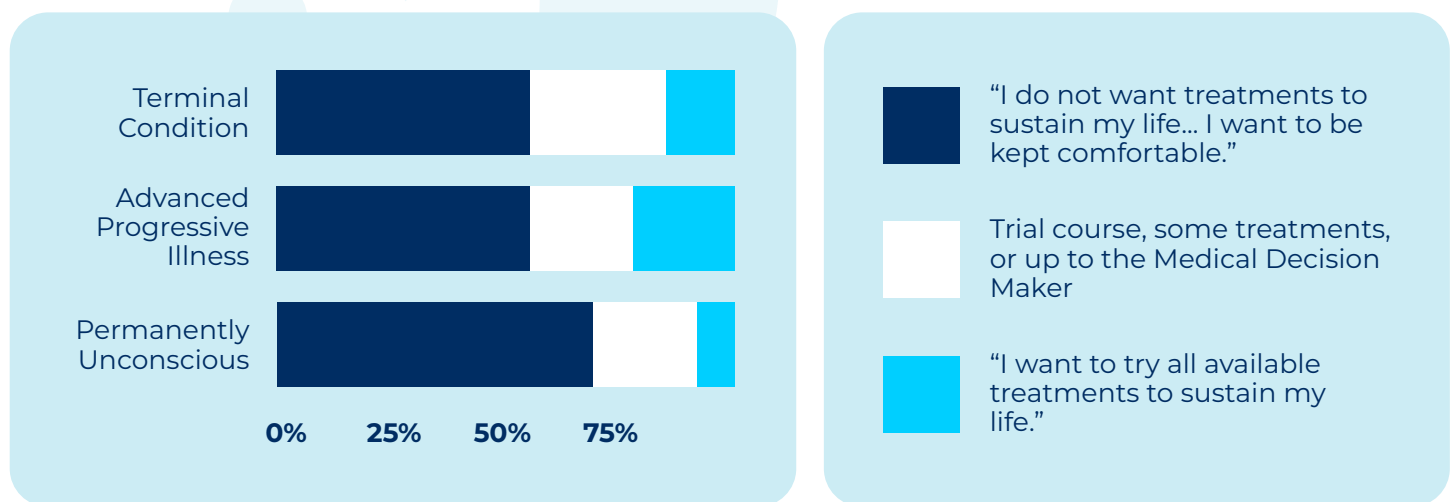
Outcomes and Insights

A Quantifiable Success.

Between June and September of 2022, the collaboration resulted in the completion of 64 Advance Care Plans. The success of this experience prompted TPPP and its grant funders to secure additional funding to extend these efforts to rural counties in Central Oregon. Moreover, they acquired invaluable population-level insights that can guide future policies and interventions that they develop or advocate for. Notably, participants expressed a stronger bond with animal companions compared to the general population, frequently stating that they would decline care if it meant their pet would be unsettled.

64
ACP Plans Fully Completed (from June-September)

75%
Identified a Medical Decision Maker

43.3
Average Age

Population Level Insights.

Koda helped these individuals express what care mattered to them if they weren't able to speak for themselves. For terminal conditions, advanced progressive illnesses, and conditions of permanent unconsciousness, more than 50% of individuals indicated that they would not want life sustaining interventions and would instead want to focus on comfort. For a population that often does not have the ability to advocate for themselves, this was an opportunity to stay in control of their healthcare journey at all times. Moreover, we acquired nuanced insights that inform future policies and interventions that The Peaceful Presence Project can advocate for.

Terminal Condition	
Advanced Progressive Illness	
Permanently Unconscious	

0%   25%   50%   75%

- "I do not want treatments to sustain my life... I want to be kept comfortable."
- Trial course, some treatments, or up to the Medical Decision Maker
- "I want to try all available treatments to sustain my life."

The Partnering Organizations

peaceful presence
END OF LIFE DOULAS

The Peaceful Presence Project reimagines and transforms the way communities talk about, plan for and experience the last stage of life. Inspired by the Compassionate Communities Model of Care, their work recognizes that caring for one another during times of crisis and loss is not simply a task for health and social services but is everyone's responsibility. As such, their educational and advance care planning initiatives are focused on improving death and grief literacy as a means of cultivating cohesive networks of care to increase community resilience, as well as higher quality and more equitable end-of-life care experiences.

Learn More at: thepeacefulpresenceproject.org

KODAHEALTH

Koda Health builds tools that simplify difficult conversations in healthcare. Clinically validated and research-driven, Koda's flagship ACP software platform provides payors and providers the ability to engage their patients in valuable conversations about their care preferences. Through Koda, patients have a single source to explore their values, identify a surrogate decision maker, define their quality of life, indicate treatments that matter, and complete and share advance directives — all without burdening their care team. By working with health systems and health plans, Koda increases revenue for billing providers, drives cost savings for at-risk systems, and ultimately is able to offer their services to patients completely for free.

Learn More at: kodahealthcare.com

Participant Testimonial

"This is really great. I've tried to do an advance directive before but those forms they give you at the hospital are so hard to understand. This is so much easier!"