



For Immediate Release

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Community Health Options Saves Local Jobs in Fort Kent, Maine

When a call center closed in Northern Maine, a work-at-home opportunity opened up

Lewiston, Maine, May 18, 2020 – In late April, when COVID-19-related business closings created the worst unemployment rates since the Great Depression, a small team of call center workers in Fort Kent, Maine were starting new permanent jobs with Lewiston-based Community Health Options (Health Options), the state’s only nonprofit, Member-led health insurance plan.

Canton, Ohio-based Ameridial opened the Fort Kent call center in September of 2013 and provided Health Options with varying numbers of contract employees since the insurer began offering coverage in 2014. Ameridial began downsizing that site last year, and in December, 2019 notified Jane Cariello, VP, Service Operations at Health Options, that it would be closing on April 23, 2020. At that time, all remaining Fort Kent Ameridial employees worked on the Health Options account.

“We’ve maintained a relationship with the Fort Kent call agents because they provide consistently exceptional customer service,” said Cariello. “Their experience and skill in working with our clients prompted us to offer the whole team jobs with Health Options. It was an easy hiring decision.”

The Fort Kent team brings the advantage of geographic diversity, which allowed Health Options to employ skilled call center professionals as the labor market in central and southern Maine tightened over the past few years. On March 24, as the number of unemployed Mainers was growing, Health Options was moving the Fort Kent workers out of the call center and into home offices, a move accelerated by COVID-19 safety measures.

“It was such a smooth transition. I’ve really enjoyed working on the Health Options account at Ameridial,” said Kim Pelletier, a Fort Kent resident and Health Options’ Lead Member Services Associate. “They always go out of their way to make us feel like part of the team. If they are having a pizza party in Lewiston, they make sure we get pizza up here, too. It’s a great job where I can help Maine people, set personal goals, and grow in my job.”

Karen Deprey, who recently retired from her job managing the Fort Kent Ameridial call center, is gratified to see this partnership continue. “Health Options saw the potential in Fort Kent people – we excel at customer service. It’s part of the strong work ethic we have up here, and we like helping people. We appreciate people bringing work to our beautiful town, so we are loyal workers who want to stay with the same company for as long as possible.”

Because Health Options is committed to providing exceptional customer service and dedicated to creating effective employment conditions through at-home working arrangements, the relationship with the Fort Kent team has survived the pandemic and will continue to thrive.

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About Community Health Options – Community Health Options (Health Options) is the only Maine-based, non-profit, Member-led health plan providing comprehensive, Member-focused health insurance benefits for individuals, families, and businesses. For more information about Health Options, visit the website: HealthOptions.org