



## FORUM SPOTLIGHT SERIES

# Delivering whole-person care virtually across a global population

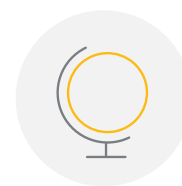
Speaker: Kyle Longton, COO, American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA)



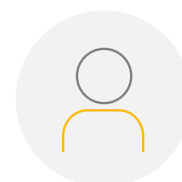
## Bringing consistent benefits support to a global workforce can be challenging.

Especially when the workforce is dispersed across more than 170 countries, often moving internationally, and sometimes with a first aid kit as their nearest care option. Kyle Longton is Chief Operating Officer at the American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA). He is responsible for AFSPA's full range of operations, including managing the Foreign Service Benefits Plan, which covers more than 85,000 foreign service members and their families. In his session at Teladoc Health's 2021 Forum event, Longton discussed navigating the complexities of a geographically dispersed workforce and the role of flexible virtual care solutions in providing service members access to high-quality care, no matter where they are.

While most of AFSPA's plan members work for government agencies, like the Departments of State and Defense or the Department of Homeland Security, they often do not work in the same country. "Our members are not one size fits all, and our solutions aren't either," said Longton. "In some cases, we have one solution that works for our members in the United States, and we have another solution that works for our members overseas." But their preference, whenever possible, is to have one single global solution that members can take from post to post—this means finding care options that members can use when they are stationed overseas and then stateside once they return. For AFSPA, virtual care has played a central role in enabling this possibility.

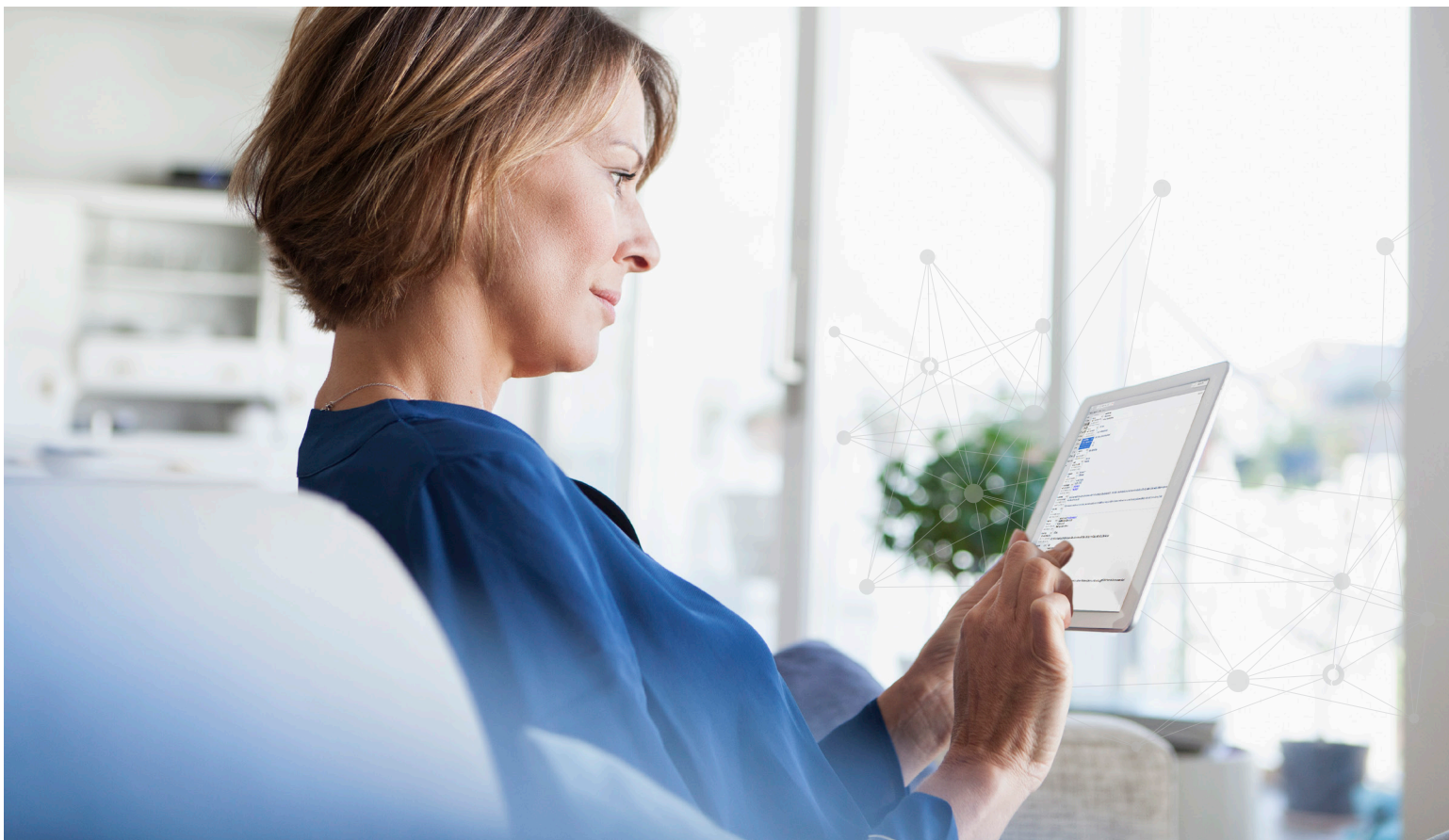


AFSPA's global workforce spans  
**170**  
countries



**85,000**  
foreign service  
members





## Building adaptable and responsive care solutions for a global workforce

AFSPA's journey providing virtual solutions began during an emergency situation in 2012. A member in Korea needed emergency care in the middle of the night, didn't speak Korean, and was seeking care from a local provider who didn't speak English. It was in response to this event that AFSPA implemented a telephonic emergency translation line as a benefit solution, "so our members could get support and care whenever they need it, wherever they need it," said Longton.

The commitment to deliver on this promise was what moved AFSPA to continue expanding their benefits solutions by looking at nontraditional options that better fit the care needs of their members. Just three years later, they were already offering a range of digital solutions and apps to their members. One of these was myStrength, which gave members easy access to digital mental health self-care resources. This was particularly helpful for members overseas, who often don't have easy or ready access to behavioral care due to language and cultural barriers.

“

Our members cannot walk out of the embassy in Moscow or Beijing or the consulate in Shanghai and just talk to the first person who's qualified. They need to know that what they're sharing is secure. So this solution gets them the support they need without having to worry about compromising anything.

**Kyle Longton, COO,**  
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But beyond removing some of these more obvious barriers to seeking mental care, myStrength also provided an additional level of security. “Our members cannot walk out of the embassy in Moscow or Beijing or the consulate in Shanghai and just talk to the first person who’s qualified,” said Longton. “They need to know that what they’re sharing is secure. So this solution gets them the support they need without having to worry about compromising anything.” Longton explained that being able to offer virtual mental health care, with high standards of quality and confidentiality transformed the way members sought and engaged in these services.

## AFSPA’s journey in expanding access to care

Introduced  
myStrength  
(now part of  
Teladoc Health)

2016

Introduced virtual  
behavioral health  
solutions for  
members overseas

2018

Partnered with Teladoc  
Health to offer virtual  
health solutions for  
stateside members

2020

Introduced stateside  
telehealth coverage

2017

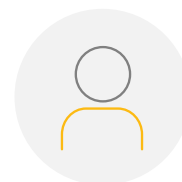
Launched Livongo  
(now part of Teladoc  
Health) for diabetes

2019

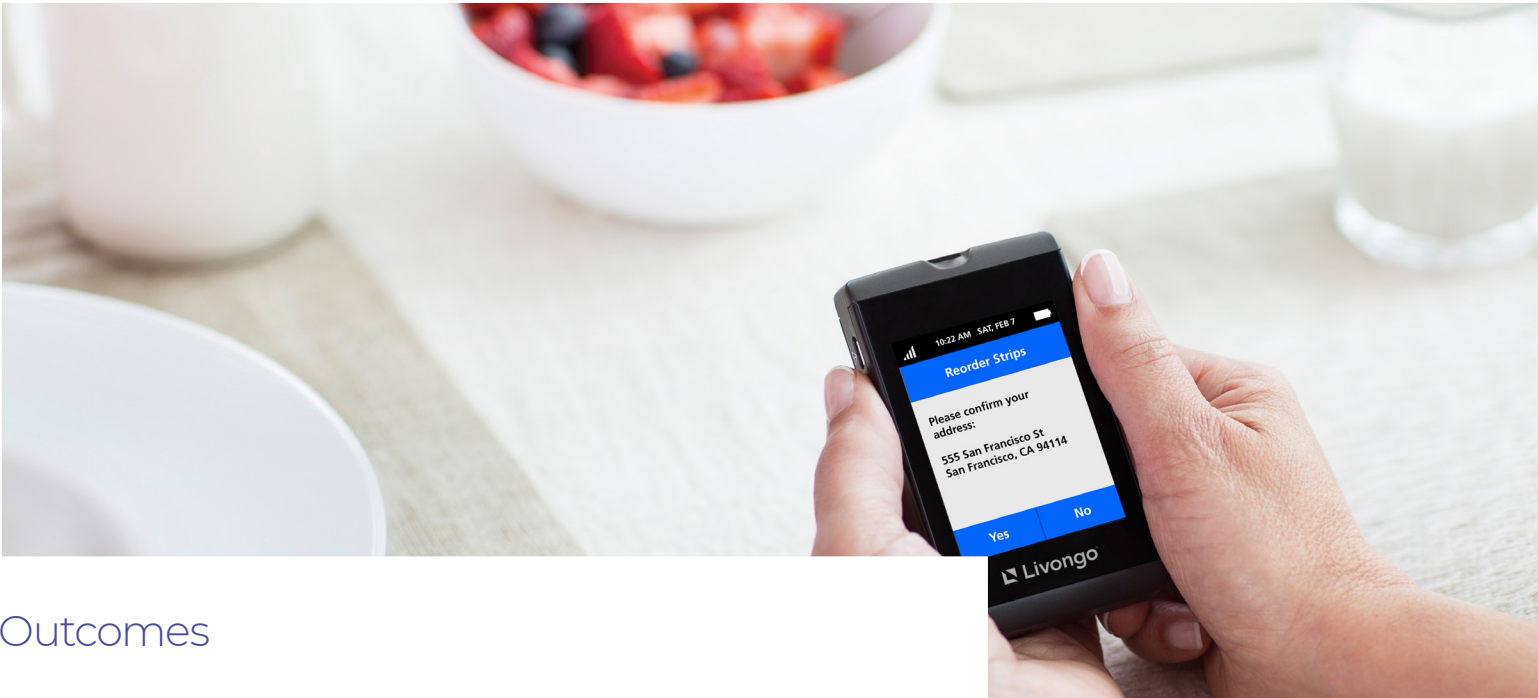
Expanded virtual  
care benefits for all  
members stateside  
and overseas

2021

The next step in AFSPA’s journey was improving diabetes management—one of the leading conditions contributing to their claims costs—by leveraging virtual care. They strategically sought out partners to bring this to life, and chose Livongo for its 24/7/365 remote monitoring and real-time digital coaching available globally, which had proven medical and pharmacy savings. Longton also noted that Livongo’s ability to customize the program and design a solution that matched AFSPA’s specific needs was critical to the program’s success: today members across more than 20 countries use this service to manage their diabetes. AFSPA partnered again with Livongo the following year to develop a virtual hypertension care solution for members worldwide.



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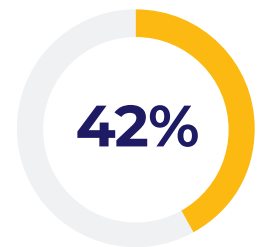
## Outcomes

### Virtual care became a necessity

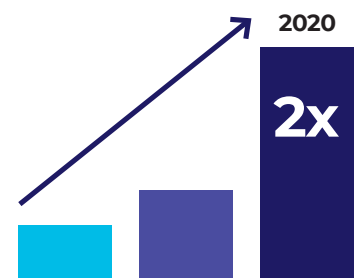
When 2020 came along, AFSPA had big changes planned, including partnering with Teladoc Health, yet the nature of the pandemic required standing up additional emergency solutions quickly. Soon, the role of virtual care delivery evolved from supporting specific needs to becoming an essential element of care.

“This last year [virtual care] was particularly important, we’ve all heard anecdotes or perhaps experienced ourselves, delayed care across a spectrum of needs,” said Longton. But for AFSPA, virtual care solutions have kept the number of those without access to timely care lower than it would’ve been otherwise, particularly for acute needs. In fact, of members who utilized Teladoc Health for their general medical care during this time, 14% would not have sought care otherwise. “They would have either just waited for it to get worse or waited for it to go away,” said Longton. Of those who used Teladoc Health’s virtual mental health care, a staggering 42% indicated they would have not done so through traditional methods.

Longton shared that even those who didn’t seek care with a provider have been strongly engaging with their health. In fact, participation in myStrength more than doubled in 2020 alone. For AFSPA, having these virtual offerings in place meant being able to support their member’s needs during challenging times. “I’m so glad they had access to that care, and sought that care out,” Longton said.



**of those who sought virtual mental health care** said they wouldn’t have sought help through traditional methods.



Participation in myStrength **more than doubled** in 2020 alone

## Better health at a lower cost

As a federal program, the Foreign Service Benefits Plan is measured on clinical outcomes, so keeping metrics on how these programs are improving health outcomes is critical for AFSPA. As Longton explained, consumer engagement across some of these solutions has been remarkable — and this remote patient engagement has translated into better health outcomes. Members using the Livongo chronic condition management program for hypertension (now a part of Teladoc Health), for example, check their pressure 18 times a month on average. Those using the program also saw their systolic blood pressure drop by almost 10 mmHg, and their diastolic drop by 6 mmHg over a 90-day period. “These are the quality measures that are important to me,” said Longton. “If I can see that the clinical outcomes are showing these decreases... [then] I know that my members are less likely to develop more complex conditions, they’re less likely to end up in the emergency room or inpatient stays, they’re less likely to be referred or prescribed specialty medications.”

All of this has an economic impact as well. When healthcare costs and utilization are likely to stay down, the cost for the whole plan and premiums stay down for everyone. “So we can offer more wellness programs that support getting healthy and staying healthy,” said Longton. He also shared that in 2020 alone, **AFSPA saved around a half-million dollars**, simply by giving members access to Teladoc Health services “and that’s just an estimate for our stateside members. That doesn’t include overseas. These are solutions that have a real impact,” said Longton.

Looking to the future, Longton acknowledges that despite the successes, there are still frontiers to cross. One of their top considerations as they expand to make their benefits solutions even more comprehensive, is integrating a virtual primary care solution for members worldwide. Longton also urged listeners to consider the importance of creating a seamless and integrated experience for members across these programs. “Ultimately, each member is in charge of his or her health, but we are here to provide the support that they need,” he said. “We can’t do that effectively if our care managers, pharmacists and others don’t have access to all the necessary data. We need our partners to be willing to talk to each other and provide that hands-on support. Technology is great, but we should be using it to facilitate better human interactions, not replace them.”

Visit our [Resource Center](#) to learn more about the power and potential of whole-person virtual care.

18

blood pressure checks per  
month on average

10mmHg

average reduction in  
systolic blood pressure

## Actionable takeaways

- 1 Leverage integrated, data-driven virtual care solutions to deliver consistent, high-quality care across geographically dispersed populations.
- 2 Expand your benefits program by focusing first on the specific care needs of your members, and select programs based on how well they meet these needs.
- 3 Seek out partners who offer adaptable solutions with a global reach when you have members outside the United States in order to create a seamless, whole-person care experience.

## Speaker bio



Kyle Longton is the Chief Operating Officer for the American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA). His responsibilities include managing the Foreign Service Benefits Plan and more than a dozen other programs to support the health and wellness of Federal employees, annuitants, and family members around the world. Longton hosts AFSPA Talks, a podcast about health, wellness and benefits topics with industry experts. He also serves as the deputy director of the Senior Living Foundation of the American Foreign Service, managing grant programs exceeding \$500,000 annually.

**Kyle Longton**

Chief Operating Officer  
American Foreign Service  
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**About Teladoc Health:** Teladoc Health is empowering all people everywhere to live healthier lives by transforming the healthcare experience. Recognized as the world leader in whole-person virtual care, Teladoc Health leverages clinical expertise, advanced technology and actionable data insights to meet the evolving needs of consumers and healthcare professionals.

