

## **“Cross-Border” Training: A Unique Partnership Between the Colorado and Utah SHIPs**

For many SHIPs, training staff and volunteers can be a challenge. It takes time, money, and travel. This challenge can be even greater for SHIPs located in large, rural states where it’s difficult to offer training in all areas. To address this issue, two SHIPs recently began working together to offer joint training for their staff and volunteers.

In the following Q&A, Colorado SHIP Director Liz Tredennick describes how a wonderful offer from Utah SHIP Director Darren Hotton led them to partner on a “cross-border” training initiative. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Liz ([Liz.Tredennick@dora.stat.co.us](mailto:Liz.Tredennick@dora.stat.co.us)) or Darren ([DHotton@utah.gov](mailto:DHotton@utah.gov)).



**Liz Tredennick**

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### **How did you come up with this idea?**

*Liz:* We came up with the idea after talking about how many SHIPs face similar challenges in training their staff and volunteers. For instance, it can be expensive and time-consuming for SHIPs to provide face-to-face training and update their training materials each year. So, first we shared our training materials with each other. Then, Darren offered to train some of my SHIP coordinators and counselors when he was training near the Colorado-Utah border.

### **Can you tell us a little about your “cross-border” training?**

*Liz:* So far, we’ve partnered on 3 “cross-border” SHIP trainings. The first time, Darren held a 2-day update training in eastern Utah and one of my coordinators attended that training. Then, there were a couple of times that Darren was traveling in eastern Utah and had a little free time. He offered to drive into western Colorado and spend a couple hours training some of my SHIP coordinators and counselors on any Medicare-related topic. So, he came to Colorado twice and delivered great trainings about Medicare supplement insurance. I’ve also invited Darren’s coordinators and counselors to any trainings that I do in western Colorado.

Darren’s help with the “cross-border” training has truly been a gift. I’ve been short one staff person for the past year and it’s been harder for me to get out of the office to do training, especially in western Colorado where the drive alone can take up to 10 hours! This has been a really great experience so far and I’d like to share it with more SHIPs. For instance, if I do training in northern or eastern Colorado, I’d like to invite folks from the Wyoming or Kansas SHIPs.

*Darren:* This training partnership has worked well because Liz and I have learned to “trust” each others training styles and abilities. I think this has really helped the development of the “cross-border” training. When a SHIP observes training held by a neighboring state, it can make them feel more at ease with this type of relationship. Observing other SHIP Directors or Trainers at CMS-sponsored trainings is a good first place to start. If there are any concerns, maybe a SHIP could request to work with certain trainers.

### **What kind of feedback have you received?**

*Liz:* The response has been very enthusiastic! My SHIP coordinators and counselors love Darren and would be thrilled to attend his trainings anytime. In fact, when I was short on staff and needed to contract with someone to provide training, my coordinators suggested Darren. I had to explain to them that he already has a full-time job and family in Utah!

### **Have you experienced any challenges with “cross-border” training?**

*Liz:* No, we haven’t experienced any major challenges so far. We just had to become more familiar with the differences between Colorado and Utah with respect to plans options and regulations. For instance, when Darren came to Colorado to train about Medicare supplement insurance, he had to learn a little about our Medigap regulations and plan options since they’re slightly different from those in Utah.

*Darren:* One way to get around this issue would be to use only CMS-sponsored training materials during “cross-border” training. Then, the training material would be general and state-specific products would not have to be disregarded.

### **What advice do you have for other SHIP Directors?**

*Liz:* We all do basically the same work; so much of Medicare is the same nationwide. As such, SHIPs don’t need to develop every bit of training all by themselves. It makes more sense economically and resource-wise to share. We’re all trying to do more with less and by sharing our trainings or materials we can help each other save time and money. Colorado is currently in the process of redesigning its training curriculum and, when it’s finished, we’d be happy to share it with other SHIPs.

*Darren:* CMS is looking for SHIPs to develop strong partnerships with other organizations. SHIP to SHIP partnerships can be very strong and productive. If you’re interested in “cross-border” training, I would suggest that you first open the door by offering to provide training in another state. However, ego and pride have to be left at the door. Remember, the most important thing is training the volunteers; your SHIP program does not have to do everything.

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Check out HAP’s [Volunteer Program Development](#) Web page for more tools and resources about volunteer [training](#), [recruitment](#), and [management](#).