

Aide's Aide: Assistance to Home Health Aides

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1 System Introduction

Aide's Aide is a computer software system that helps Russian speaking home health aides of the Northeast region of Philadelphia better and more efficiently serve their clients as well as help each other by sharing resources and information.

2 User Group Description

Aide's Aide users are Russian speaking home health aides that serve elderly and sick people (also Russian speaking) around the Northeast locality of Philadelphia. The user factors that affect the design and functionality of the system are the following:

1. User group consists of around 300 aides, 35-60 years old, almost all females.
2. Users work and live in the same locality (radius of about 5 miles).
3. Most work more than 40 (often 50-60) hours, 6-7 days a week.
4. All or almost all have regular access to computers and Internet; however, technology is often bought for and used by their children.
5. Even though most users have higher education (from the country of origin), their usage of computers and Internet is limited.
6. The main speaking language is Russian. Many know only little English.

3 System Description

3.1 Problem

The duties of a home health aide include cleaning patient's houses, washing them or helping them take baths, accompanying them on a walk, buying food and other necessities, cooking,

etc. In many cases a patient has several aides as well as aides usually have many patients (most of whom live in subsidized apartments). It is not surprising that close relationships become established between aides and patients and among aides themselves. This small but tight community generates and consumes a lot of information but the use of it is highly inefficient which leads to waste of resources. For example, aides often drive to the same store several times a day to buy almost identical items for patients living in the same building, or some of them are unaware of sales at local produce stores while other enjoy great discounts (this is important since patients' incomes are often very limited). Dozens of times, I was asked for small favors from my mom's patients (she is one of the aides) related to getting and translating information about drugs, government programs, bank operations, etc. These efforts are duplicated by other aides to their patients.

3.2 Problem Solving Strategy & System's Goals

In an effort to reduce inefficiency and promote sustainability I propose to create a computer program or online site that would facilitate sharing of information to avoid duplicate use of resources including saving time and money. I talked to several aides and they welcomed creation of such program.

Since many aides lack computer experience and do not know English well enough the program should be intuitive to use and be mostly in Russian. Users should have an ability to add new information, share news, ask for help, etc. Even though the functionality of the program somewhat resembles a web forum it has many interface challenges. The interface should be simple and uncluttered, yet provide a lot of information on different topics. User should be able to find information fast and without excessive branching and be able to easily enter information under appropriate topic. To solve the interface related problems I intend to use mock interfaces starting early in the project to assess users' understanding and ability to navigate the program.

There is, however, some ethical and legal concerns that need to be addressed in the process of development of *Aide's Aide*. The patients' privacy and health related information cannot be disclosed or shared, thus some sort of privacy agreement should be signed (electronically) by all program participants.

4 About Me

For me, this project is not work-related but rather life-related. My mother and her friends have been working as aides for many years and I always wanted to help them organize their work a little better. There is no team for this project.