

MED ZED



THE RIDE ALONG

KEEPING
THE COMPANY
CONNECTED

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



“We are all here to work for the members—from leadership on down – that is what MedZed is about. This is how we do business” - Chris Towns



It's often said that in order to truly empathize with someone, you need to walk a mile in their shoes. At MedZed, our version of that is doing a ride along with them. By that we mean spending a day with a field team member, riding along with them as they work to locate, engage, treat, and take care of the members they serve.

The Power of First-hand Experience

The heart and soul of MedZed is our field team: our nurses and Community Health Navigators (CHNs) who interact with members every day are at the very core of our mission—and our company's success. Seeing them in action, as they do door knocks at members' homes, visit a homeless encampment, talk to community leaders at local support organizations, etc., is eye-opening and humbling. We see first-hand the challenges they face and the value of what they do. And we gain a profound appreciation for their unwavering dedication and compassion. The experience connects all of us MedZedians to our mission, the role we all have in supporting it, and to one another.

That's why everyone who is part of MedZed is encouraged to go on ride alongs periodically, from the executive team to managers and employees in each and every department, and even to clients. As Scott Schnell, Co-founder and CEO, says, "Everyone who goes on a ride along learns something different—maybe it's about visiting a new market we're in, or seeing first-hand the incredible barriers our members must overcome, or just getting a sense of how a new CHN feels about her job—it's all valuable."

Bringing the C-Suite and the Front Line Closer

Scott remembers his first ride along very clearly, "I saw just how well this model can work." He and the nurse visited an elderly woman who went to the emergency room repeatedly because of her inability to manage her health and a complete lack of family support. He saw in action how MedZed was able to intervene and address the woman's health-related social needs, stabilize her clinical condition, and connect her to primary care – resulting in a drastic reduction in her ER utilization. Scott uses his time in the field to connect with front line staff, to understand their day-to-day reality and their perspective on what they need to be most successful in reaching and helping their members.

"I need to hear their honest take on things so I can stay connected to them and what's happening at the ground level."

Of course, for many team members, it's their first time meeting a CEO, so Scott spends the first 30 minutes of each ride along reassuring the nurse or CHN that he isn't there to pass judgement; for him the ride along is an opportunity to learn. "At the end of the ride along, we both understand more about how all the pieces are working—and about each other."

Chief People Officer Tami Colver headed to the field shortly after joining MedZed, eager to fully understand the field team job and experience. She admits she wasn't prepared for just how challenging the work can be. "The sightline into the degree of struggle, poverty, barriers and challenges that our members face is humbling. The overwhelming need is a heavy burden."

"I am in absolute awe of the job that our CHNs and nurses do every day. The empathy and desire to help other humans without judgement restores your faith in humanity."

On one ride along, the CHN scoured a neighborhood, looking for her member, until she found him in a shed behind a building. Later, as she was driving, she saw an unhoused member on the street, pulled over and gave her a gift card. On another, a nurse was meeting with a member in their trailer, filled literally to the ceiling with belongings, calmly made a small place to sit down and talk. Her sensitivity and professionalism conveyed care and respect for the member. She wanted only to help, connect, and comfort, not condemn.

"I saw how much they care, how much heart they put into their work; honestly, it can be really hard on them. It helped me understand how we as a company must support them and help them take care of themselves too." MedZed has expanded its EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and mental health benefits, and launched a wellness program focused on mindfulness, decompression, and self-care. Field staff have dedicated HR Business Partners who are required to do ride alongs, and according to Tami, her team truly "gets" what the field team is all about. "The shared experience of a ride along brings us closer; we feel that we as MedZedians are part of something important together."



Program Management from the Passenger Seat

For MedZed Program Managers and Directors, regular ride-alongs play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of their field teams. While the frequency of ride-alongs may vary depending on the manager, they consistently occur in every market that MedZed serves. They enable managers to stay closely connected to the fieldwork and proactively address any challenges that arise. They also serve as a valuable tool for evaluating the performance of their staff and ensuring accountability.

But the benefits go far beyond providing structured mechanisms for assessment and continuous improvement. Managers value the opportunity to step out from behind the desk and day-to-day managerial responsibilities to connect directly and personally with their CHNs, nurses, members, and the community. Our Program Managers started their careers at MedZed out in the community as field staff. They have all experienced the barriers of locating members and creating connections, but conditions and circumstances change and there are new challenges to understand, new knowledge to gain, and new communities to understand. By participating in ride-alongs with their staff, Program Managers connect to current realities and are better positioned to offer guidance and foster a culture of support and collaboration within the team.

The one-on-one time spent together brings the manager-staff relationship to a whole new level. At the end of a long day, their interactions give each other a window into the other's personalities, motivations, and aspirations. Knowing one another on a deeper level builds a stronger sense of camaraderie and mutual respect.

Sharing Experiences—and Purpose



“Nervous, definitely a bit nervous,” but mostly excited to give others “a feeling for exactly what the members go through,” that’s how CHNs describe taking MedZed leaders and clients on ride-alongs. As Melissa Wright explains, “It’s just different to see the members needs personally, their environment and neighborhoods and all the things CHNs go through to connect with them and provide the services they need.” Erica Stull emphasized that ride-alongs demonstrate the reality of the CHNs’ work beyond numbers; they “show how the CHNs meet members right where they are, in every stage of their lives.” What also comes through is CHNs’ dedication and resilience, and how personally invested they are

in caring for their members. “I spend a lot of time with some members—they’re almost like family,” says Chris Towns, “The work can take a mental toll; I’m glad leadership gets to understand how emotional this is for us.” CHNs gain insight into opportunities to help their members—and themselves. When hosting a client, one CHN said she asked tons of questions about the plan’s benefits and learned so much. She also saw how eager to help they were: when they met with a member who had tried unsuccessfully to get his dentures replaced, the client placed a call and got the process rolling before the end of the visit. Several MedZed executives on ride-alongs have provided her broader perspectives on the company and given her ideas on areas of improvement and opportunities to further her career.

Perhaps most importantly, CHNs come away from the experience feeling like they and their colleagues have a shared purpose. Chris described how he and Enrique Balaguer, our Chief Growth Officer, talked about it: “we’re all wearing a MedZed jersey and playing for the same team.” It made a difference to get to know him personally and see his passion for our work. Melissa noted, “I worked in a hospital for 15 years and you don’t meet the president of the hospital.” Getting to share her day-to-day experience, she said “you get a sense of ‘we belong’—we’re all here for the same reason, to serve our members.”

“I had the pleasure of doing a ride-along with Erica Stull from the Maryland Med-Zed team in June of last year, and I was immediately impressed with how well she knew the members assigned to her, and her diligence and willingness to help in the various ways the members needed her. What I learned that day during my ride-along is that MedZed is a company like no other. They will go above and beyond and do everything they can to help and find members to bring them into care.”

Rashé Coleman, Director of Healthcare Quality and Equity, Maryland Community Health System

Employee Spotlight: Chris Towns

- Christopher Towns is coming up on his two-year anniversary at MedZed and feels like his role as a Community Health Navigator is a true fusion of “purpose and passion” for him. He had worked in construction and food services, but during the pandemic, switched to community outreach.
- He’s a busy man! Chris is a devoted husband, father and Poppa to nine grandkids. “I appreciate the honesty that comes from kids – they tell it like it is!” He loves to spend time with his family, Facetiming every day with the ones who are far away. And he loves music and dancing, “dancing keeps you young!”
- Chris also is devoted to his team at MedZed, he considers them his work family. “We share information, we talk and support each other.” His manager Nicola Gordon praises the compassion and empathy he brings to his role. “He embodies the values of care and support. He is full of encouragement and inspiration and motivates our team to strive for excellence through his own exemplary conduct.”

