In a technology driven world where knowledge can be immediately accessed by the touch of a button, it is hard to believe that people have a difficult time keeping track of seemingly simple information, even the time of a long-awaited doctor’s appointment. One such population in which access to information such as date and times is extremely limited or unavailable are the people of Salt Lake City who are facing homelessness.

A problem of missed appoints were initially identified at The Fourth Street Clinic. The Fourth Street Clinic is a primary care clinic that provides high quality health care and supportive services for the homeless population in the Salt Lake Valley. Through survey research, we found that the problem of missed appointments exists across the entire country (85.6% response of yes missed appointments were a major problem in their clinic). Clinic no-shows at outpatient clinics result in decreased efficiency, loss of revenue, and prolonged medical care associated problems. Although efforts to reduce missed appointments are being made through the use of emails and text messages, the nature of homeless life foes not align with these reminder methods. Disadvantaged people have been found to be 3 times more likely to miss appointments.

This encouraged our team to look for a way to help this gap in healthcare. We are working to create a durable yet inexpensive bracelet device that reminds patients at several specified time intervals before their appointments. Clay was given to patients at the Fourth Street Clinic to model their ideal device. They were also surveyed for their concerns on wearing the bracelet in their given conditions. This information was used to develop a prototype device. It displays an LCD screen and oscillating motor. It is considerate of patents with visual and learning impairments, and the low profile case deters theft and water damage. Additionally, after working with clinic medical assistants, a platform for busy work environments has been constructed. Medical assistants can plug the watch in for charging while the patient is at their appointment, and then record new times with each visit.

This device will meet the key need by providing timed text alerts of appointments. We are working to meet a critical need expressed across the entire nation. Although the task of improving health in the homeless is a big one, starting with this innovative device it is possible for us to change the lives of millions.