

Colorado Cancer Coalition Priorities: 2016-2018

Option 10 of 10: Cross-Cutting: Patient Navigation & Community Health Workers

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Goal 11: Increased patient engagement and health literacy.

Objective 11.1: Increase the availability of patient navigator and community health worker services along the cancer care continuum.

→ Strategies

- Identify the current and projected patient navigator and community health worker workforce needed in the cancer care continuum (prevention to end-of-life care).
- Promote competency-based and accessible training for patient navigators and community health workers within the cancer care continuum.
- Promote the implementation of evidence-based patient navigator and community health worker services within the cancer care continuum

→ Measures

	Data Source	Baseline	2020 Target
Cancer treatment facilities employing patient navigators	TBD	TBD***	TBD
Community health clinics employing patient navigators	TBD	TBD***	TBD
Communities employing community health workers	TBD	TBD***	TBD

***Colorado's cancer community will explore data source options and determine a baseline and target by December 2017

→ What we know about the problem

- In a report on CHWs (which includes patient navigators in their definition), the CDC summarizes the numerous barriers to controlling chronic disease, including inadequate intensity of treatment and failure of providers to follow evidence-based guidelines, lack of family support, failure to adhere to treatment, lack of support for self-management, lack of access to care and being uninsured, differences in perceptions of health that are culturally based, the complexity of treatment, costs of transportation and other expenses, and an insufficient focus in the United States on prevention and on support from social and health care systems. PN and CHW roles address help to address and overcome these barriers.
- **A Patient Navigator (PN)**, may also be referred to as lay navigator, health navigator or resource navigator. A PN assists individuals in reducing and eliminating barriers to health care access and in negotiating complex health delivery systems. In Colorado training programs are available to prepare PNs for this role, ranging from community college certificate programs, on-line trainings and university offerings. Typically, PNs are employed by health delivery systems including primary care, specialty care and managed care. They facilitate the provision of whole person, coordinated and culturally competent care.
- **A Community Health Worker (CHW)**, may also be referred to as lay health worker, community outreach worker, community health advisor, promotora or lay health advocate. A CHW is a lay member

Colorado Cancer Coalition Priorities: 2016-2018

of the community who is trained in some way to deliver an intervention to community members in community settings. In Colorado, training is provided by community -based organizations deploying CHWs and the community college system. Typically, CHWs share ethnicity, language, SES and life experiences with the community members they serve. Historically, CHWs have worked primarily with vulnerable, underserved populations and are deployed by community-based organizations.

- PN and CHW play an important role in the reduction of health disparities and typically work with medically underserved individuals and/or individuals at higher risk for disease or poor disease outcomes.
- Literature shows that patient navigation can increase positive health outcomes.

→ Why should CCC members prioritize this area of work?

Prioritization factors	Considerations	Notes
Likelihood of Population Impact	Integrating patient navigators into health systems and community health workers into communities has potential to decrease health disparities in underserved populations.	
Evidence of Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World-wide, including in Colorado, there are many programs that use PNs and CHWs which show positive health outcomes within the cancer continuum of care. • Evidence of effectiveness continues to grow. 	
Established Need	Existence of health disparities and multiple barriers, especially in medically underserved populations can be addressed by PNs and CHWs.	
Measurability	At this point, the need to establish measures, both within the Cancer Plan, and to show health impact, is important, but also one of the biggest challenges for this objective.	
Collective Impact	Patient navigation and community health work is one of the few objectives that can have positive effect on multiple other cancer plan measures across the continuum of care and other health care issues.	
Identified Gaps	Health disparities in the cancer continuum of care continue to exist with little	

Colorado Cancer Coalition Priorities: 2016-2018

	improvement. Barriers to care within the medically underserved community perpetuate these disparities.	
Opportunities for Leveraging partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado is the home to the Patient Navigator Training Collaborative. • CDPHE is in the process of setting up a lay patient navigation credentialing and voluntary registry system. • PN and CHW have the potential to contribute to the attainment of the “Triple Aim” (reduced health care costs, improve health, improve quality of care). 	
Political/ community support	The Colorado Patient Navigator and Community Health Worker Alliance has formed to help sustain these roles.	

Would you or your organization commit to helping with this priority?