

Health care is complicated. A diverse and qualified health care workforce is more important than ever. CDPHE is committed to ensuring that we have the workforce that we need for the future, including team-based coordinated systems of care.

## HEALTH NAVIGATORS ENHANCE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE AND REDUCE HEALTH CARE COSTS

The ability of care teams to attend to the needs of patients with complex conditions and different cultural backgrounds is enhanced through health navigators who can effectively communicate with and assist individuals who are typically underserved by the health care system. Health navigators are employed throughout Colorado, in urban and rural communities, improving health equity by increasing access to health care for vulnerable populations.

### WHAT IS A HEALTH NAVIGATOR?

A health navigator (also known as a patient navigator or lay navigator) is a trained member of the health care team who helps patients identify and reduce barriers and navigate the complex health care system. Health navigators initially worked with cancer patients. Today, they work in hospitals, community health centers, private practices and other agencies, assisting individuals across the continuum of care, from prevention to end of life.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH NAVIGATOR?

Health navigators build trusting relationships with their patients. They help them make, keep and prepare for appointments; arrange transportation and translation services; link patients and families to community resources; coordinate care across different health care providers; and support and encourage patients.

**CDPHE IS LEADING THE WAY IN DEVELOPING A TRAINED WORKFORCE OF NON-LICENSED HEALTH NAVIGATORS TO HELP IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES AND REDUCE HEALTH CARE COSTS.**

### WHY SHOULD A HEALTH NAVIGATOR BE PART OF THE CARE TEAM?

Research shows that health navigation:



Reduces health disparities.



Improves patient engagement with their health.



Enables patients to get the care they need.



Improves health outcomes.



Reduces health care costs.

## CDPHE WORK

Between 2013 and 2018, the department invested more than \$32 million in grants that include health navigation training and service. These grants have funded health navigators in communities throughout the state to help patients prevent and treat chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

CDPHE began the Health Navigator Workforce Initiative in 2015 to help employers identify and develop a health navigator workforce in Colorado. Key partners from health care organizations and providers, Medicaid and other insurers, health navigators and consumers, and the state departments of Labor and Employment, Regulatory Agencies and Education provided input and oversight to this work. The Initiative surveyed employers, identified core competencies and established training standards.

CDPHE created the Colorado Health Navigator Registry, a voluntary, public registry of unlicensed navigators in Colorado who meet entry level competencies to work in health care. Health navigators who successfully complete a recognized training program and competency assessment are eligible to be listed in the Registry. Listing in the Registry adds a layer of protection for patients and employers.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The full implementation of the credentialing program will be complete in Summer 2018, including comprehensive registries of training programs and health navigators. Employers can reference this list to confirm that prospective health navigators possess the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective member of the health care team.

CDPHE is working with partners to improve access to health navigator training statewide and support career pathways for a diverse population of navigators, including:

- Aligning education and training programs with core competencies.
- Demonstrating health navigator qualifications to employers.
- Clarifying the role of health navigators to health care professionals, policymakers and the public.
- Integrating health navigator work within the health care team, allowing licensed providers to focus on the provision of direct health care services.

## HEALTH NAVIGATOR ENTRY-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

**Ethical, legal and professional issues.**

**Health beliefs and behavior.**

**Psychology of illness.**

**Disease-specific knowledge.**

**Health care system structure/function.**

**Resources and referral.**

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**Patient/client assessment.**

**Patient/client interaction and communication skills.**

**Work within patient/client health care team and community.**

**Health care team patient/client communication.**

**Appropriate referral for behavioral health or emergency medical care.**

**Care coordination.**

**Patient/client activation, education, support.**

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**Professionalism and development.**

**System change.**

**Program development and management.**

*\*Competencies are not static and may evolve over time to meet the needs of an ever-changing health care system.*