



## **TYPE OF INTERVENTION OR STRATEGY:** Individual

**GOAL:** The main goal of patient navigation<sup>9</sup> is to enroll more PWHAs in care and treatment as early as possible by training clients who have experience navigating the health care system themselves, to participate as patient navigators and guide newly diagnosed PWHAs into care and treatment services. Patient navigation also provides support for newly diagnosed persons as they become connected to treatment services.

**CHALLENGES THAT CAN BE ADDRESSED:** Connecting newly diagnosed PWHAs to treatment services and supporting and retaining current clients in care.

**OVERVIEW:** It is important to connect newly diagnosed clients to care so that they can establish relationships with healthcare providers and benefit from early treatment. However, evidence shows that vulnerable and underserved populations do not always receive timely, appropriate advice and care when confronted with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. For underserved populations, patient navigators can make the difference between accessing early treatment or being lost to care.

Patient navigators are individuals who have successfully utilized healthcare services and now serve as “mentors” to newly diagnosed clients with the goal of providing support and assistance in accessing HIV care services. In this strategy, a client who has recently tested positive is directed by a counselor-tester to a patient navigator (on the same day of their diagnosis if possible); the patient navigator then helps the client enroll in care. If the client does not wish to enroll on the day of their diagnosis, the patient navigator provides follow up services working with the client to encourage him/her to enroll at a later date. The patient navigators will also be a source of ongoing assistance and support throughout a client’s treatment and care.

Patient navigators can be an integral part of ensuring that clients effectively utilize healthcare services and manage their HIV/AIDS. For many clients, navigating the complexities of the healthcare system can be challenging. Patient navigation services provide clients the opportunity to work with someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience to guide patients and their families in accessing quality care and treatment.

**APPLICATIONS:** Patient navigation can be used to connect newly diagnosed clients to care as soon as possible. The close contact with a patient navigator also helps personalize the treatment system, and provides support to the client. Patient navigation can help clinics and clients in the following ways:

- Newly diagnosed individuals can be enrolled in care soon after diagnosis
- The contact between the new clients and patient navigator can help connect the client to care
- Patient navigators serve as role models and mentors to newly diagnosed clients
- Patient navigators can help prepare clients for appointments to health care, labs, etc., and can go with clients to appointments until clients are connected to services
- Patient navigators can help problem solve with new clients, as needed, and can serve as liaison between the new client and the providers, and the clinic

<sup>9</sup> Patient Navigation in Cancer Care was developed by Pfizer Inc.


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**PROVIDER ROLE IN PATIENT NAVIGATION:** Providers need to identify systems and procedural changes that may need to be developed or adjusted due to using patient navigation and assure that the agency and all staff are prepared to work with the clients who may be coming in through this method of outreach. For example agencies may need to:

- Develop policies and agreements for working with HIV testing services, so that patient navigators can meet newly diagnosed clients and navigate them to treatment services.
- Develop a “fast track” for clients who access services in this manner, so they can be connected to care as quickly as possible.
- Designate a specific staff person to meet clients when they are navigated to the agency.

In addition, providers can work in partnership with the patient navigator to advocate for clients’ needs.



To effectively engage and retain clients in care, providers should develop a “fast track” for clients to connect them to services as quickly as possible.