

Link Volunteer Navigator Program

St. Joseph Mercy Health System, Cancer Center

Summary

The Link Volunteer Navigator Program was successfully expanded from the St. Joseph Ann Arbor location to the locations of Brighton, Canton and Chelsea. With the goal of significantly increasing awareness of free support resources offered by St. Joseph Mercy Health System, as well those of program partners, the American Cancer Society and Cancer Support Community of Greater Ann Arbor, the program utilizes the successful, evidence-based volunteer patient navigator model. A Masters prepared social worker serves as the dedicated program coordinator at St. Joe and handles recruitment, on-boarding, training and continued support of new volunteers. A testament to the success of the program, the partnership was awarded the 2017 Spirit of Collaboration award from the Michigan Cancer Consortium.



Organization Involvement

- Volunteer retention and continuing training to support the program.
- Building on the Link Volunteer Navigator role to include various staff supportive tasks to enrich the role and staff engagement.
- Continuing to target patients who are in minority and/or low socioeconomic groups.

Challenges

- Orienting existing volunteers at new sites to procedures and having them be supervised closely was a challenge.
- The Cancer Center renovation in Ann Arbor resulted in less referrals during transition.
- Ongoing tracking of participants at partner organizations as a result of referrals was difficult due to different tracking mechanisms at the organizations.

Solution

Patience and flexibility with the new sites helped with implementing Link procedures and with developing rapport between the program coordinator and existing volunteers. This also helped the program manage as the Cancer Center in Ann Arbor was moved for renovation.

"A patient recently said, "Thank you for all that you are doing" referring to resources provided. Her thankfulness really made me appreciate this opportunity. The LNP is wonderful and I'm glad to be a part of such a great program." - Diamond Brantley, Link Navigator Program BSW Intern 2017/2018

Results

When this program was initiated, the Link Program made 779 contacts during 2014 and 2015. At the completion of the entire timeframe (Oct 2014 – Sept 2017) the program had made 4583 contacts - far surpassing the goal of 1600 per year. In November 2015 the program had 7 volunteers and at the end of September 2017 there were 21. At the program initiation, 5.1% of the patients reached by the program were African American; that percentage rose to 9.1% by September 2017. Subsequently, referrals to financial navigators also rose from 17 to 73 during the same period.

Sustaining the Success

- The Program Coordinator is continuing program support and has dedicated a BSW Student Intern who is also available to support the program.
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- There are continued monthly partner meetings to ensure all parties are involved and seeing successful referrals to programming.



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