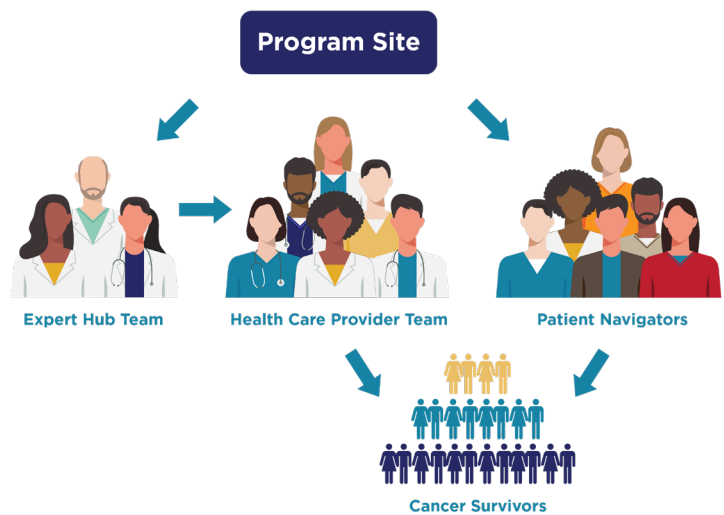


# Using Project ECHO and Patient Navigation to Improve the Health and Wellness of Cancer Survivors in Rural Communities

## > Background

Rural populations in the United States face higher cancer death rates than urban populations, despite lower overall cancer incidence.<sup>1</sup> CDC conducted a pilot study to reduce health inequities experienced by rural cancer survivors. Four National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (NCCCP) sites in Kansas, Montana, Nevada, and South Carolina were funded to implement Project ECHO's telementoring platform and engage patient navigators to enhance care for cancer survivors in rural communities.



## Project ECHO and Patient Navigation Workflow

## > Project Activities

### Project ECHO

Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) uses telementoring within communities of practice to increase workforce capacity and enhance the knowledge and skills of rural health care providers (HCPs). Staff at NCCCP sites collaborated with various partners to:

- Conduct telementoring sessions with HCP teams.
- Plan and host ECHO sessions for health care teams, including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, patient navigators, and social workers serving rural areas, to:
  - Provide education on the needs and issues faced by rural cancer survivors.
  - Improve and increase medical and social support services provided to rural cancer survivors.

### Patient Navigation

Cancer patient navigation aims to remove barriers to health and mental health care. Staff at NCCCP sites collaborated with rural clinics to:

- Identify cancer survivors.
- Link HCPs and cancer survivors to state and local resources.
- Partner with a rural federally qualified health center to connect cancer survivors with patient navigators.
- Help patient navigators refer cancer survivors to wellness programs.



## > Project Achievements



### Project ECHO

21

ECHO sessions were delivered.

240

participants attended ECHO sessions.

79%

of ECHO session participants said they intended to apply what they learned during the sessions.

92%

of participants said they learned something during the sessions.



### Patient Navigation

16

patient navigators were trained to serve cancer survivors in rural areas.

164

survivors were helped by patient navigators.



## Keys to Success

- Establish clinical partnerships with primary care associations and federally qualified health centers that serve cancer survivors.
- Align site and partner goals for sustained commitment.
- Develop a clear understanding among HCP teams of their role in cancer survivorship.
- Use patient navigation software to track contacts between patient navigators and cancer survivors.
- Develop and execute a strong marketing plan to reach intended cancer survivor populations.
- Adapt materials from existing evidence-based programs and resources to save time and effort.

<sup>i</sup> Henley SJ, Anderson RN, Thomas CC, Massetti GM, Peaker B, Richardson LC. Invasive cancer incidence, 2004–2013, and deaths, 2006–2015, in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan counties—United States. MMWR Surveillance Summaries 2017;66(14):1–13.

