

Family Navigation: (Concept paper/draft)

(This draft is modeled after health care's patient navigation program.)

To reintegrate children and families we must provide outreach and education programs that inform families and provide access to timely services that will assist in keeping the family together.

There is a particularly critical window of opportunity to prevent out of home placements. Many barriers may be experienced during this interval. Commonly experienced barriers during this interval are:

- Financial Barriers
- Communication and Information Barriers
- Child Welfare System Barriers
- Fear and Emotional Barriers

The most important role of Family Navigator is to assure that any family with a need will receive timely assistance. The Navigator accomplishes this most effectively through one-on-one contact with the family at the point of investigation or intake. The purpose of this process is to eliminate barriers to understanding the issues and providing recommendations to the family. In order to accomplish the above, I believe the Family Navigator should have the following characteristics:

- Culturally attuned to the people of the community being served, able to communicate, sensitive and compassionate.
- Very knowledgeable of the environment and system through which the parent/family must move in order to obtain services.
- Highly connected and allied with critical decision makers within the system, especially with the financial decision makers.

Note: No particular level of formal education is required.

In addition:

The purpose of a family navigator program is to decrease fragmentation of care, coordinate services, and guide families seeking services through the child welfare system. The family navigator is an integral part of the program. Navigators bridge the gaps in family's access to care. Specifically, family navigators:

- connect patients with resources and support systems;
- facilitate interaction and communication with child welfare staff and cwcb's providers;
- streamline tasks, appointments and paperwork;
- help parents/families identify and access financial services to pay for their case plan needs;
- help parents/families arrive at scheduled appointments on time and prepared;
- help decrease parents/families fear and anxiety;
- help parents/families identify and utilize appropriate social services; and
- track interventions and outcomes.

The primary responsibilities of the family navigator are to assist parents/families that have child welfare involvement to navigate through the child welfare system. Depending upon the complexity of the case, some family navigators may have the added responsibility of engaging in outreach and education strategies to increase awareness in their community. Navigators can also provide some outreach strategies: this is a decision based on patient volume, characteristics, and needs, as well as child welfare resources within their respective communities.