



## Using Client Navigators to Help Women Obtain Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings

### Public Health Problem

The faces of Georgia's cancer patients are changing as the communities become more racially and ethnically diverse: the percentage of African American, Hispanic, and Asian women more than 40 years of age in Georgia increased from 27.2% to 30.5%, between 1997 and 2000. Barriers to obtaining cancer screenings must be addressed so that these women can receive appropriate and timely screening, follow-up, and treatment.

### Program Example

Georgia's Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (BCCP) began using client navigators, also referred to as lay health advisors or community health workers, to provide outreach, education, and case management services in underserved communities. The BCCP developed and piloted a training course to improve and support the skills of client navigators and the quality of service they provided. The course also provided skill-based training in communicating; understanding different cultural beliefs, values, and norms; and eliminating barriers to screening. Seventeen client navigators have been hired and trained through this program. The client navigators' duties are twofold: they help women get needed breast or cervical cancer screenings, and they help the case managers conduct follow-up with their patients. For example, when a client cannot be reached by telephone or mail, one Georgia BCCP provider sends a client navigator to visit the home to assess the situation, discuss needed care, and resolve barriers.

### Implications and Impact

The use of client navigators has been effective in linking women with the health care system and with sources of ongoing, appropriate medical care. Using client navigators increases the number of women screened by focusing on and addressing their specific health care barriers. Client navigators create relationships that build trust between a client and the health care delivery system, and they make more economical use of available staff by permitting clinicians to focus on patient care. One success story shared by a client navigator was about a quadriplegic patient. This patient received her Pap test and clinical breast examination at her home and on a later day was taken to her mammogram appointment through transportation arrangements made by the client navigator. This is one example of how client navigators in Georgia are addressing barriers to breast and cervical cancer screening, follow-up, and treatment; dispelling myths about cancer; and helping women overcome their fears and go forward with their plan of care. Without such support, many women might not complete their screening and follow-up. Using client navigators who are trained to handle these situations is one way that public health can overcome major health disparities.