

ACS CARES

Patient Navigation Support Program

Frequently Asked Questions



Every cancer. Every life.

Last updated June 1, 2023

General

What is ACS CARES?

The American Cancer Society is launching ACS CARES (Community Access to Resources, Education, and Support), a new program designed to provide non-clinical patient navigation support to those affected by cancer. The program includes three components:

- A digital app that utilizes the ACS social determinants of health assessment to provide self-service navigation support with curated information tailored to each person's needs.
- 24/7 access to support from caring, trained NCIC staff who can connect people to ACS programs and national/local resources and information.
- Personalized support from trained ACS volunteers. Community volunteers will provide virtual support through the app, and student volunteers will provide in-person support at health care system sites.

Why is navigation support important?

Navigation is an evidence-based intervention that provides individualized assistance to patients, families, and caregivers. These services can benefit all cancer patients but are especially crucial for those who experience barriers to care due to social, cultural, or economic barriers. Patient navigation can improve the overall patient care experience and lead to sustainable and equitable health solutions for all cancer patients.

How is it different than navigation support offered by health care systems and providers?

ACS CARES provides non-clinical navigation support by addressing patients' social needs and barriers to care (transportation, lodging, food security, emotional health, financial health, dependent support, and more). This program complements the clinical navigation support that health care systems provide, allowing nurse navigators to leverage their oncology expertise and focus on clinical needs.

Is this program new? Hasn't ACS been working on navigation for a while?

This is a new program that builds upon ACS knowledge and proven resources, such as NCIC, while layering in new elements like the digital app. The ACS approach is unique and exciting because it systematically identifies each person's needs and barriers to care, so we can meet people where they are, sharing the right information and resources at the right time.

ACS CARES is part of our comprehensive patient navigation strategy that includes capacity building grants, the ACS National Navigation Roundtable, the global BEACON initiative, and ACS CAN's policy priorities to support navigation.

For decades, ACS has viewed patient navigation as a critical tactic in addressing inequities in access to care, because it is one of the few interventions with demonstrated effectiveness at removing barriers and increasing access to care through the provision of coordinated, patient-centered support across

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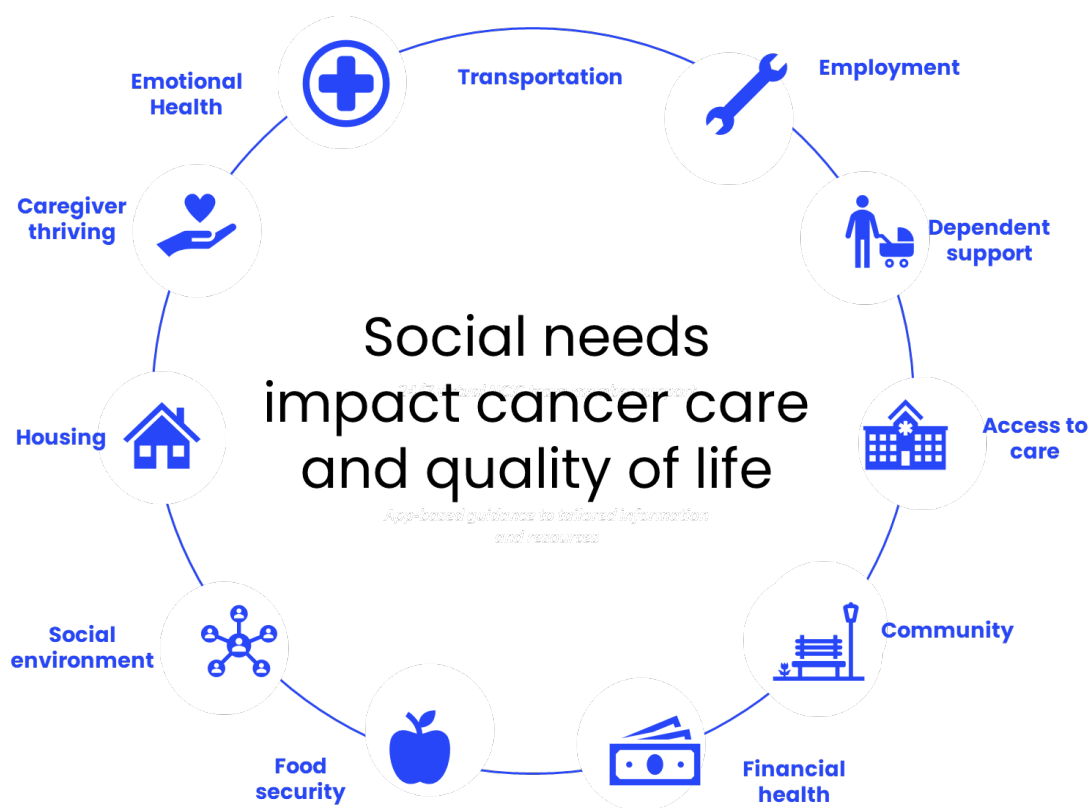
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the cancer care continuum. Over the years, ACS has led and funded efforts to build navigation programs, supported public policy related to navigation, and examined the role and benefits of navigation through research. This new program builds upon a strong foundation of this past work.

What does the ACS social determinants of health assessment include?

The social determinants of health (SDOH) assessment helps identify needs that we know will impact a person’s cancer care and quality of life. The assessment will ask questions in several areas including transportation, housing, emotional health, financial health and more – see the graphic below for a comprehensive view. With this information, ACS can more effectively connect individuals with the services and support related to those needs.



Who can use ACS CARES?

Due to the location of our partner services (e.g., transportation, lodging, etc.), the digital app is designed for patients, caregivers, and community volunteers living in the US or its territories.

Clinic-based student volunteers will be placed at health care systems. Patients and caregivers receiving care at these facilities will have access to these in-person volunteers. In 2023, ACS will

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partner with four health care systems. Please see section on “Health Care Systems and Pilot Sites” for information pilot sites.

When will ACS CARES be available?

There will be a limited release of the digital app in June and widespread availability later in 2023. This phased approach will allow ACS to identify and address opportunities for improved user experience prior to widespread promotion.

Clinic-based student volunteers will be placed at four health care systems. Their shifts will begin in September 2023 to align with the start of the college/university school year.

When will ACS CARES be announced to the public?

The new program was shared with ACS volunteers at the Volunteer Leadership Summit in January 2023.

Marketing and communications about the new program will begin in June as part of the pilot launch of the digital app.

Will the app or program services be offered in Spanish?

The digital app will be available in Spanish in January 2024. Until then, constituents will still be able to access educational resources written in Spanish within the app. At any point during the app experience, constituents can tap an icon to call NCIC and speak with trained ACS team members, including the option to talk with Spanish-speaking staff or access interpretation services for other non-English language support.

How does a patient or caregiver take part in ACS CARES if they don't have a smartphone or access to the app? Can they access the information through a web browser?

In addition to being able to speak with trained ACS team members over the phone through NCIC, ACS student volunteers embedded in oncology clinics will be able to support individuals without digital access or who prefer not to use apps. The app is also designed such that a caregiver or other support individual who feels more comfortable or has digital access can use the app on behalf of the patient or primary caregiver.

The app will be extended to a web-based version in a later phase.

How was ACS CARES developed?

Over the past year, a cross-functional group of ACS team members, led by Dr. Bonny Morris, senior director, patient navigation (patient support), have developed the program across nine integrated workgroups. The workgroups include team members from many areas of the organization, including those who work on other ACS patient navigation initiatives.

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The program is being built with feedback and insights from the Patient and Family Advisory Group and key stakeholders in and outside of the organization to inform the program components and patient/caregiver experience. The clinic-based student volunteer model draws on Dr. Morris' experiences while leading the nonprofit Take the Fight to Cancer.

How does ACS CARES align with existing ACS programs and services?

Each of our ACS programs and services offer unique benefits to individuals across the cancer continuum. They are designed to meet people when and where they need help, and in the way each individual prefers to communicate. For example, we know some people prefer to connect digitally, some in person, and some on the phone. Patients and caregivers may also engage with different forms of communication at different times – a web site at one point, through a telephone call, or via an app at another.

ACS CARES is unique because it uses a social determinants of health needs assessment to systematically identify concerns and barriers to care, which is not currently used for any other ACS programs and services. The app uses an algorithm to curate existing ACS information and resources for users, tailoring them specific to each person's unique concerns. This means the ACS CARES app may suggest a user might be interested in several different ACS programs and services, based on their interactions in the app. From NCIC to Road To Recovery, the app will suggest programs and services specific to each person's needs.

Similarly, ACS CARES volunteers will be an additional programmatic resource for the organization which the app will suggest for users, based on the SDOH assessment, and aligned based on individual needs. Like Reach To Recovery, this is meant to be a resource that connects individuals with a cancer experience, complementing existing ACS resources.

How can I learn more?

In the coming months, ACS CARES updates will be shared on ACS2Go, My Society Source, and eNews. Also, this FAQ will be revised as updates are available.

Volunteers

Who can be a volunteer in the program?

This program offers two volunteer opportunities – community volunteers and clinic-based volunteers.

1. **Community volunteers** will provide **virtual support** to patients and caregivers via the digital app. Patients and caregivers will select their volunteer "match" based on the characteristics that are important to them. **Community does not imply a geographic location, but rather a characteristic that people might have in common.** Initial matching options include someone who:
 - has experienced cancer

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- has cared for an adult with cancer
- has cared for a child with cancer
- has navigated cancer as active-duty military or a veteran
- has navigated cancer living in a rural area
- has navigated cancer living in an urban area
- can help me find information and/or resources

Matching options will expand as the program grows.

2. **Clinic-based volunteers** are college/university students who are trained to provide people with cancer and caregivers direct, individualized, non-clinical navigation assistance throughout the cancer journey. These volunteers will be placed at health care systems and will:
 - Be members of the ACS on Campus chapter who have applied, interviewed, and been accepted as an ACS Navigation Support volunteer
 - Receive specialized navigation support training, including patient privacy, how to function in the health care setting, and coordinating with professional navigators
 - Commit to one year of in-person service with one 4-hour shift (minimum) per week
 - Meet with patients and caregivers while they are waiting for their appointment or during chemotherapy infusions

Will volunteers be trained? What does training look like?

All volunteers must complete ACS onboarding and training requirements. ACS training will likely be multi-modal, including both self-led online modules and real-time instructor-led training. Modules will include Navigation Basics, Cancer 101, ACS Programs/Services, Financial Basics, Patient Communication, Health Care Team Interactions, Health/Digital Literacy, Caregiving and Pediatric/Adolescent Young Adult Cancer topics. Clinic-based volunteers must also satisfy all health system onboarding requirements.

How does someone express interest in being a volunteer?

More information about clinic-based volunteer opportunities [can be found here](#).

Those interested in the community volunteer role should email acscares@cancer.org.

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Health Care Systems and Pilot Sites

How will health care systems be involved in ACS CARES?

In 2023, four health care systems/cancer centers have been selected as pilot sites. The clinic-based student volunteers will start their shifts at these sites in September, aligning with the start of the school year for the college/university. Patients and caregivers at those locations will be able to utilize the full suite of services offered in the ACS patient navigation support program: digital app, 24/7 information from NCIC, and support from community and clinic-based volunteers.

Additional health care systems will be selected as sites for clinic-based volunteers. This selection process will occur later in 2023 (with volunteer shifts starting in the fall of 2024). The selection criteria and process will be shared with staff when available.

Where are the pilot sites?

The four pilot sites are:

- University of Iowa
- The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) at the College of Charleston
- The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
- Case Western Reserve University / University Hospitals in Cleveland

How are the pilot sites selected?

A cross-functional team of ACS staff considered various criteria, including geography, population served, proximity to ACS patient support programs (e.g. Hope Lodge), and proximity to ACS on Campus (college chapters). The Data Science team in Digital Solutions created maps based on those criteria to help the team visualize potential pilot site locations. Also, Cancer Support Strategic Partnerships team members provided qualitative input based on their knowledge of the system. Using this information, a list of potential pilot sites was created. Invitations were sent to sites in January.

More information about the site selection process can be found in the below graphic.

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Site Selection Process

American Cancer Society-Related Criteria Analyzed

01

ACS on Campus College Chapters

ACS On Campus is the American Cancer Society's program to empower students in our collective mission against this disease. **ACS On Campus** chapters are student-led and staff-supported. (*Metrics Analyzed:* Distance from Cancer Center, Strength of ACS On Campus Chapter, Transportation to/from Campus)

02

ACS Relationship with Cancer Center

With which Cancer Centers is ACS actively engaged? (*Metrics Analyzed:* All Cancer Centers in Salesforce with an ACS Relationship Coordinator actively managing the relationship, Does the Cancer Center have an existing relationship with the nearby University or College where we have an ACS on Campus College Chapter?)

03

ACS Patient Programs

Mapping of **ACS Patient Programs** in proximity to Cancer Centers and ACS on Campus College Chapters: (*Metrics Analyzed and/or mapped:* Hope Lodge, Extended Stay America program, ACS Transportation and Lodging Grants, Active Road to Recovery Programs, etc.)


04


ACS Grants in Proximity to Sites


Mapping of **ACS Extramural Discovery Science** Grant Recipients and **ACS Patient Navigation** Grant Recipients completed. (*Metrics analyzed:* ACS Patient Navigation grant recipient sites were analyzed to ensure that selection as a Wayfinder site would not bias program evaluation).

Cancer Center-Related Criteria Analyzed

 **Geographic Criteria Analyzed**
Distance from Campus, Urban/Rural, Availability of Transportation

 **Potential Program Champions/Leadership**
Easily identifiable program champions at both Cancer Center and Campus to support program adoption and sustainability

 **Variety of Cancer Center Type**
Metrics Analyzed: Type of health systems: e.g., NCI, CoC, VA, Academic Medical Center, Annual Analytic Cancer Caseload if known, etc.).

 **Population to be Served**
Metrics Analyzed: Annual Analytic Cancer Caseload (if known), input from ACS Relationship Coordinator and patient population served by Cancer Center