

July 31, 2025

Leveraging Community Health Workers

to Support Refugee Health

switchboard
connecting resettlement experts





Thank you for joining today's training!

We will begin momentarily.

Today's Speakers



Sarah Clarke

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Director, Society of
Refugee Healthcare
Providers



Adrien Matadi

Technical Advisor, Society
of Refugee Healthcare
Providers



**Tavia
Mirassou-Wolf**

MPH, Unit Supervisor,
Colorado Department of
Public Health and
Environment



**Charmaine
Jackson**

RN, CRL, Nurse
Supervisor, Valleywise
Health Pediatric Refugee
Clinic

Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

IDENTIFY

five key barriers to health care access experienced by preferred language other than English (PLOE) communities

2

COMPARE

three care navigation models to select the best approach to addressing challenges in your own work

3

APPLY

real-world strategies to your own work with PLOE communities to help overcome health care access barriers



1

Key Health Care Barriers

Experienced by Preferred Language Other than English (PLOE) Communities



In your experience, what barriers to health care do PLOE communities most encounter?



Barriers for Clients with Preferred Language Other than English

1

Access to cross-cultural health services

2

Stressors and competing priorities

3

Navigating the U.S. health care system

4

Variability of resources based on location

5

Expectations/ understanding of health care system



Case Scenario: Claudine

Claudine is a 35-year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo who arrived in the U.S. as a refugee six months ago with her four young children.

After completing an initial health screening, Claudine begins experiencing ongoing stomach pain.

She receives a referral to a specialist, but no interpreter is present during the visit, and the instructions are not translated.

Unsure of what the referral means or how to schedule the appointment with the specialist, Claudine does not follow up.

Although she has health insurance, she is unsure what it covers and how to use it. Instead, she continues to focus on urgent priorities, including enrolling her children in school and finding a job.

Her stomach pain continues, and someone from her community suggests an over-the-counter remedy.



What barriers is Claudine experiencing in accessing care?



2

Care Navigation Models

Selecting the Best Approach to Addressing Challenges in Your Own Work



What strategies might you use to address health care navigation barriers with PLOE newcomers?

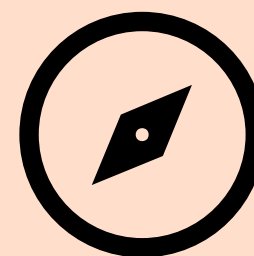
Key Terms in Care Navigation Models



Community health workers work outside of fixed health care systems to assist community members



Patient navigators are members of a health care team who guide patients through the health care system and help address barriers

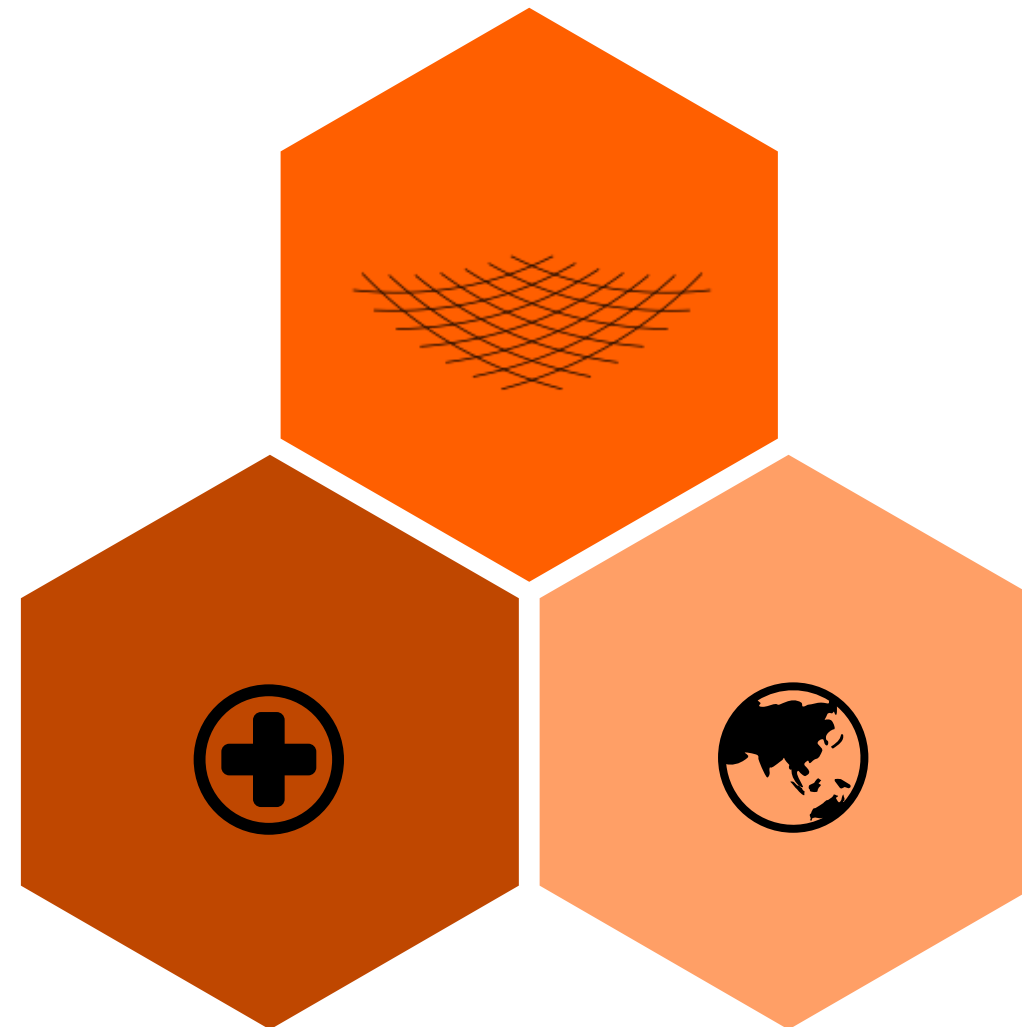


Cultural navigators are community partners who serve as a trusted and confidential bridge between members of the community and public health

Three Care Navigation Models



1. Patient Navigators: Safety Net Health System Model



2. Cultural Navigators: Public Health Model

3. Pediatric Refugee Clinic



Panel Presentation

Explore how organizations in three U.S. locations leverage community health workers and patient navigators to support PLOE communities in accessing health care.

Public Health Model



Cultural Navigation Roles and Responsibilities

Prime community members	Attend and organize cross-cultural outreach and educational events and campaigns.
Partner for public health interviews	Coordinate navigators to assist with public health interviews.
Attend community clinics	Provide support for testing, vaccination, and outbreak response.
Strategize	Review and provide input on public health messaging, outreach, and data collection strategies.

Public Health Model: Cultural Navigator During Public Health Interview



1

A newcomer is identified as someone who would benefit from a cultural navigator

2

Cultural navigator contacts the newcomer, asks for permission to attend future calls, and connects with the public health interviewer, indicating language preferences

3

The public health interviewer meets with the newcomer, accompanied by an interpreter

4

Post call, the public health interviewer shares challenges with the cultural navigator, including any needed data

5

Post call, the cultural navigator also calls the newcomer to answer any questions and, if needed, to collect missing data points

6

Cultural navigator shares additional data points with the public health interviewer, and the interview is considered closed



Safety Net Health System Model

Patient Navigation in Cross-Cultural Settings

- Integrated safety net health system with primary, specialty, and acute care services
- Denver Health Refugee, Immigrant, and Newcomer Health Services (RIN-HS)
- Patient navigation established in 2015



Refugee Clinic Model: Valleywise Pediatric Refugee Clinic

- Uses cultural health navigators, nurses, and interpreters
- Focuses on overcoming cultural barriers
- Carefully frames and delivers patient education
- Collaborates both within teams and with partner organizations

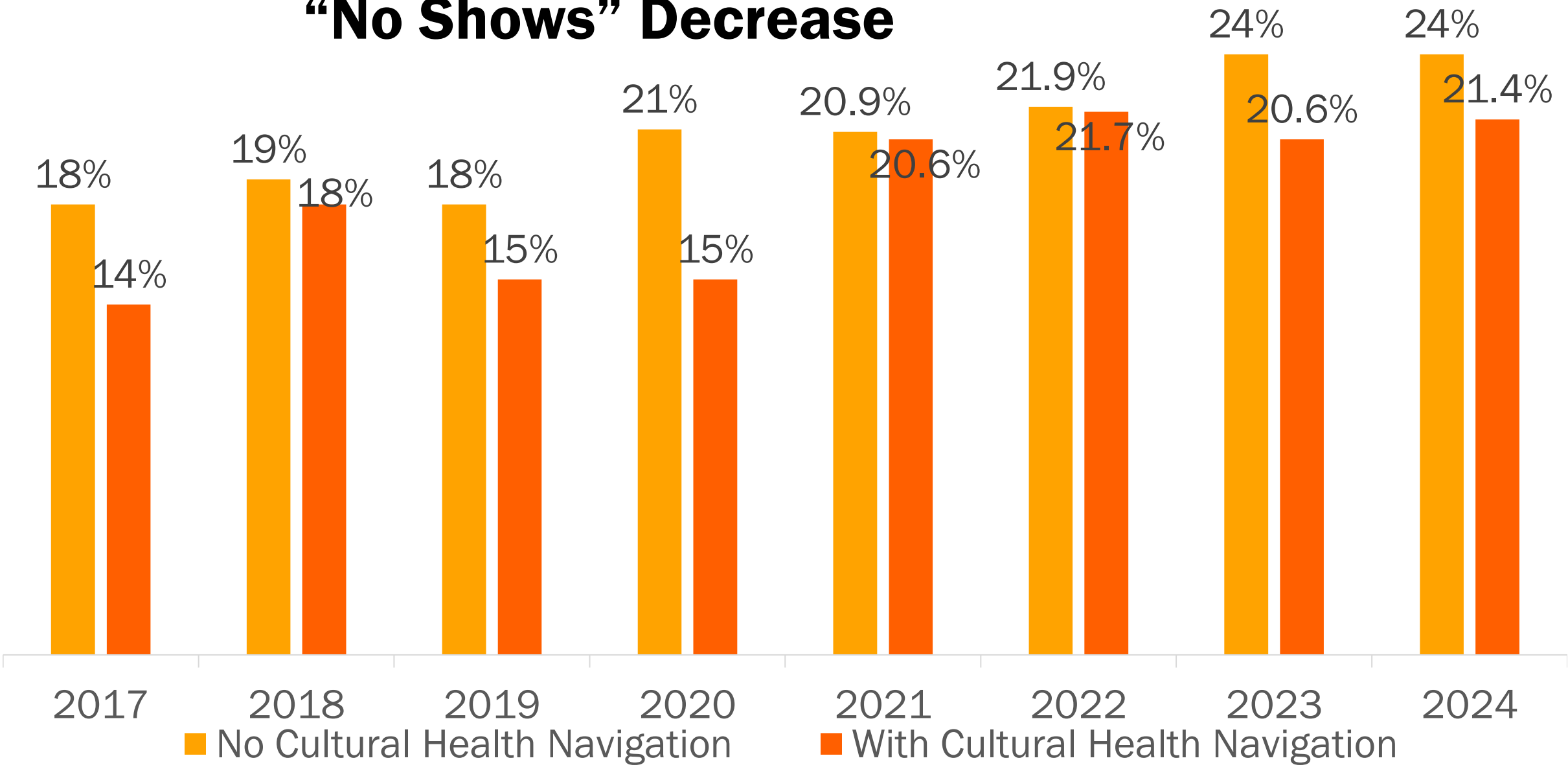
Refugee Clinic Model: Key Lessons and Results



CHNs assist with:

- Language and communication
- Appointment needs
- Format of health education
- Transportation navigation

With Cultural Health Navigation, “No Shows” Decrease





Case Scenario: Recall Claudine

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Her stomach pain continues, and someone from her community suggests an over-the-counter remedy.



What different care navigation model techniques could have been used to support Claudine better?



3

Overcoming PLOE Health Care Access Barriers

Applying Lessons Learned to Your Own Work



In your experience, what are some of the challenges that arise with different care navigation models?

Keys to Success

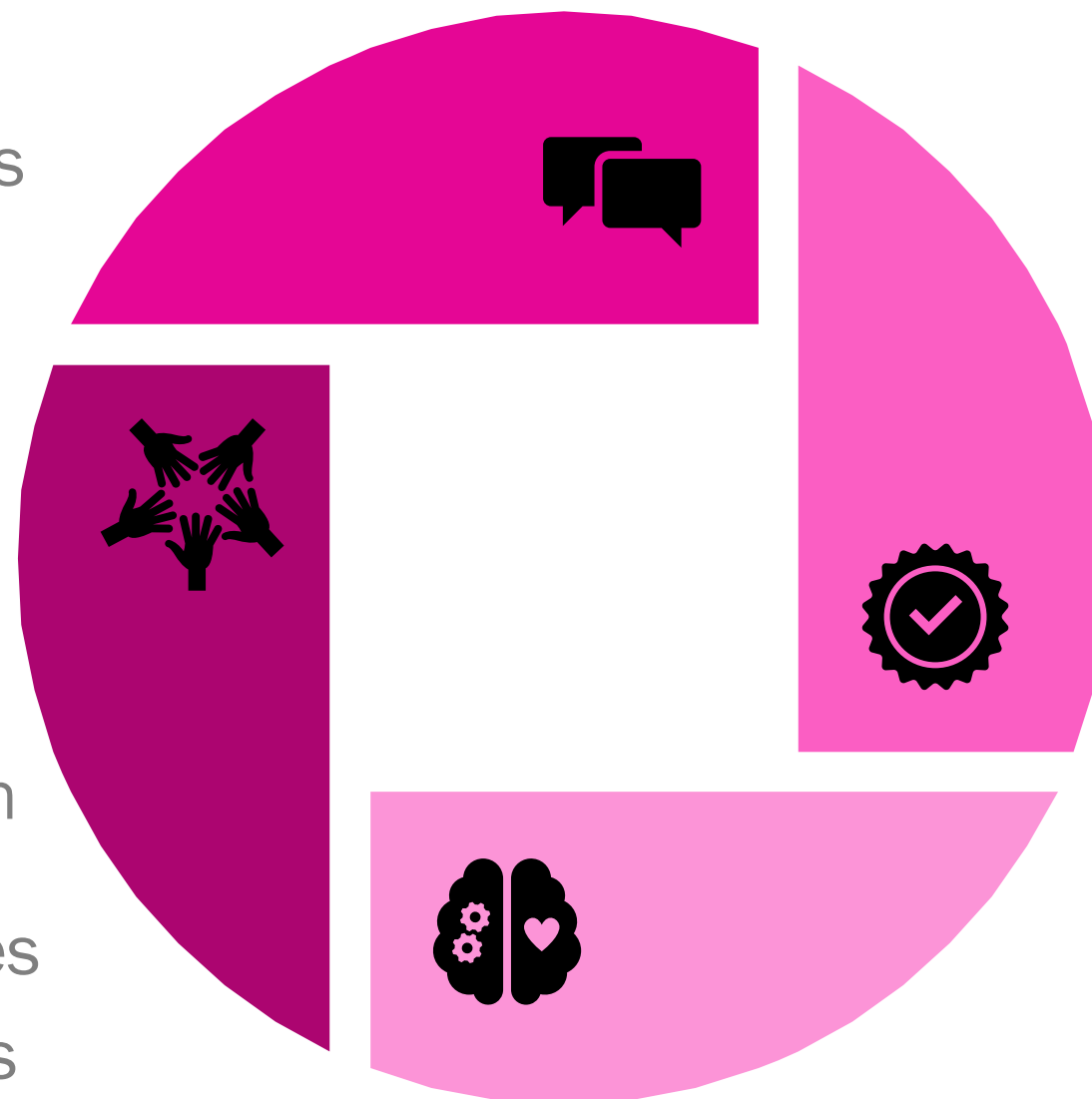


Use Trained Interpreters

- Being bilingual does not equip someone with interpretation skills
- Never use family members, especially children under 18

Increase Collaboration

- Service and medical providers can partner to help clients overcome common health care access issues
- Collaboration can also help clients with complex medical issues access services more quickly



Build Trust

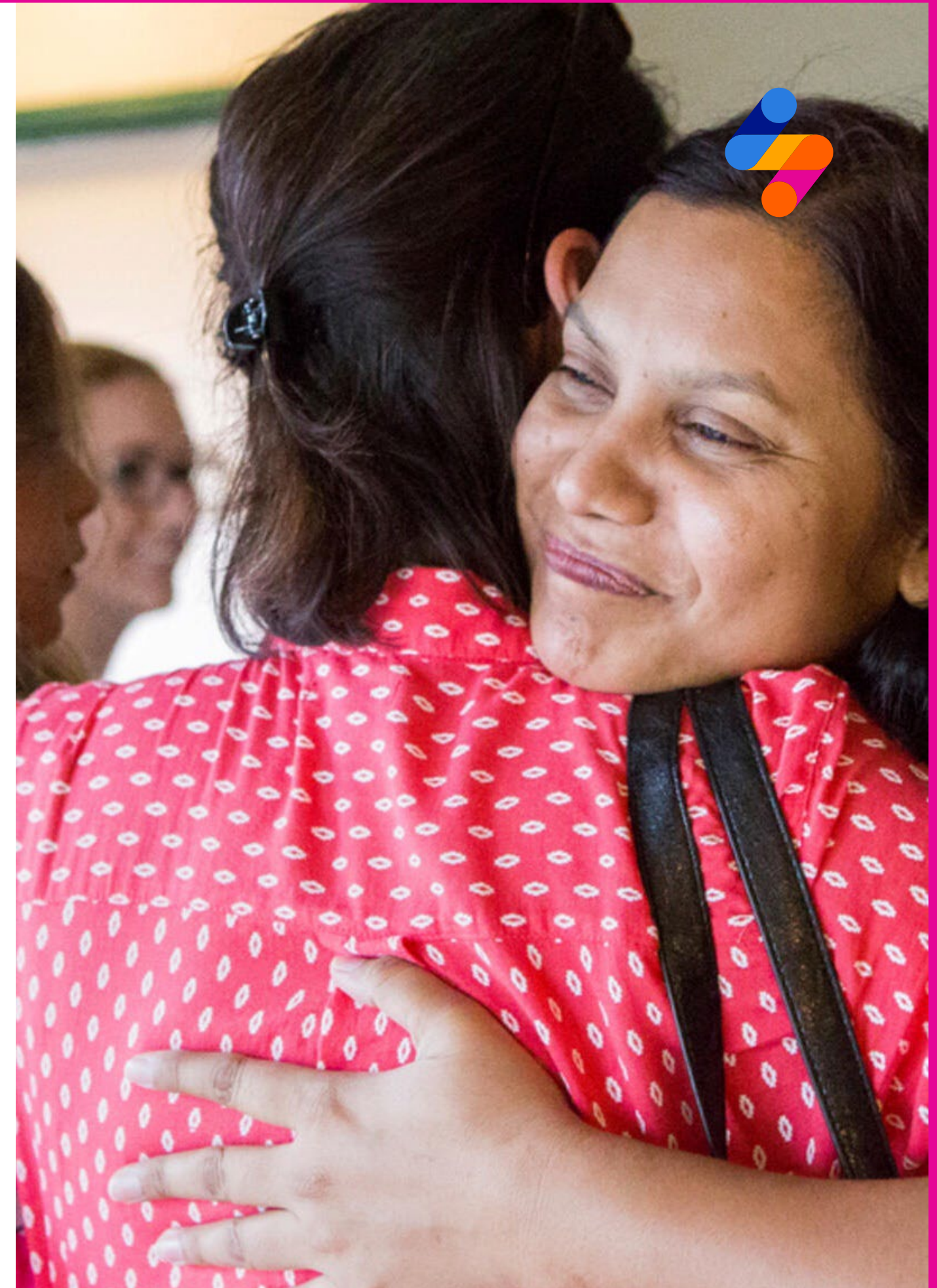
- Communicate effectively in and with multicultural communities, and respond in an appropriate manner
- Clients need to feel that their medical providers hear and understand their concerns

Inform

- For improved health outcomes, newcomers should understand their health conditions, treatment options, and the potential consequences of not following medical advice

Results

- Minimized loss of access
- Improved efficiency
- Improved patient outcomes
- Expansion of health navigators based on proof of concept





What did you learn today that you can implement in your context?



Questions?

Type your question in the **Q&A**

Click **thumbs-up**  to vote for others' questions

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Help Us Help You!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to access our feedback survey!

- Five questions
- 60 seconds
- Help us improve future training and technical assistance





Recommended Resources

- [An Introduction to Refugee Health](#)
- [Helping Clients Prepare for Medical Appointments: Checklist](#)
- [Helping Clients Prepare for Initial Medical Appointments](#)
- [Service and Health Care Provider Collaboration: Promoting Clients' Health Through Improved Coordination](#)
- [Problem-Solving Healthcare Access Issues](#)
- [Supporting Newcomer Clients with Significant Medical Conditions](#)



An Introduction to Refugee Health

Guidance for service providers

Refugees and other newcomers can have complex medical and mental health needs due to factors experienced pre- and post-resettlement. This information guide briefly introduces refugee health to service providers and includes resources that can be shared with medical provider partners new to serving refugee patients. This content was created by Switchboard in partnership with the Society of Refugee Healthcare Providers.

Refugee Health Journey

The refugee health journey refers to the process refugees experience in relation to their health and health care services starting from their country of origin through resettlement. Understanding this journey and the factors influencing refugees' health can help service and health care providers understand how best to serve these clients' needs.

Prior to Resettlement

Prior to resettlement in the U.S., refugees and newcomers may experience the [following factors](#) that impact their health (see next page):



Understanding refugees' health journey from country of origin through resettlement can help providers understand how best to serve clients' needs.



Stay Connected



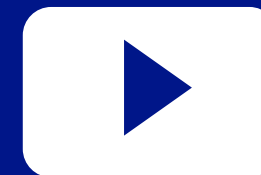
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