

The Navigator Program

A hospital-based case management intervention for people experiencing homelessness

Researchers and clinicians at St. Michael's Hospital developed The Navigator Program to improve health outcomes and health-care experiences for patients experiencing homelessness, and to reduce hospital readmission.

The Navigator Program:



Is embedded in the hospital care team, allowing for:

- Connection with patients who are homeless early in their admission
- Ongoing close communication with the medical team
- Support for patients throughout their hospital stay, discharge planning, and community transition



Has staff with homelessness-specific expertise, to provide:

- Relationship building with patients and community supports
- Resources and guidance to hospital staff to assist in discharge planning
- Advocacy related to patient needs and challenges



Includes a flex-fund to meet immediate patient needs, such as:

- Health-related costs while income supports are established (eg. prescriptions, assistive devices, cell phones)
- Transportation to and from follow-up appointments
- Items to improve hospital comfort and lower chances of early self-discharge, like coffee, reading materials, and food

One or more trained Homelessness Outreach Counsellors each carry a caseload of 15-20 patients at any given time, and follow patients for approximately 90 days following their hospital discharge. Their activities include:

- Sharing information, with consent, between hospitals and shelters, primary care clinics, and other community services involved in the patient's care
- Helping patients obtain medication and assistive devices after discharge
- Assisting in scheduling and attending follow-up appointments
- Working with patients on applications for insurance, identification, income, and long term supports

Interested in implementing the Navigator Program at your hospital?

The Navigator Program has been implemented in St. Michael's Hospital surgical and medical inpatient units, and is now being scaled up and implemented at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto and St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver.

Please reach out to Kate Francombe Pridham at Katherine.Francombe@unityhealth.to, MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions for more information. We are passionate about this program – we would be happy to tell you more about our experiences with the Navigator Program and why we think it should be implemented in hospitals across Canada. At St. Michael's and St. Joseph's, the program is funded by The St. Michael's Foundation.