

# Community-Clinical Linkages in the Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan

## **What are community-clinical linkages?**

Community-clinical linkages are connections and partnerships between healthcare providers, community organizations, and public health agencies. These connections improve access to preventive and chronic care services among people with chronic diseases like cancer, and they ensure that people have access to community resources and support in order to prevent, delay, or manage chronic conditions.

## **Why are community-clinical linkages in cancer control important?**

According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, improving access to clinical preventive services like cancer screening, community-level activities, and appropriate medical treatment has been shown to reduce and prevent disease. Some of the benefits that community-clinical linkages offer to patients include:

- Increase in patient ability to self-manage conditions
- Improvement in patient quality of life
- Prevention or delayed onset of disease progression
- Prevention of disease complications
- Reduction in the need for additional healthcare

Community-clinical linkages also benefit healthcare providers and community organizations by connecting them with clients and allowing them to offer more services to patients.

## **What are some examples of community-clinical linkages?**

Examples of community-clinical linkages include:

- Offering services like cancer screening in non-clinical (community) settings
- Referring post-treatment cancer patients to community-based chronic disease self-management workshops
- Enhancing patient navigator knowledge about community resources to assist patients
- Making pharmacists available at the worksite to provide employees with medication therapy management, education, and lifestyle coaching (in collaboration with patient primary care providers)

The **Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan** also includes many strategies that could be considered community-clinical linkages:

- Ensure ongoing access to the Maryland Tobacco Quitline and other tobacco-use cessation counseling.
- Implement evidence-based community messaging that increases the demand for tobacco cessation and that promotes awareness of the availability of cessation services.
- Implement a social marketing campaign targeting at-risk Marylanders to empower them to take advantage of the policies and programs being implemented throughout Maryland and in local communities that make it easier to make healthy choices.
- Promote skin cancer prevention and detection education through community events, health fairs, and continued partnerships with medical, outdoor occupational, and beauty industry members.
- Reduce structural barriers to cancer screening by utilizing strategies that: facilitate primary care referral for screening; facilitate screening by the use of patient navigators, community health workers, or lay health advisors to educate and assist patients; utilize mobile screening services; and promote policies that allow work-time release for cancer screening.
- Develop a Web-based resource guide in English and Spanish for cancer survivors seeking support groups, financial/legal services, and psychosocial support services.

## **What can my organization do?**

The Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan includes many additional strategies that represent community-clinical linkages. Please consider using these examples to guide the work that you do, and to inspire new projects within your organization, community, and healthcare settings!

Finally, don't forget to report your successes – submit an **Implementation Reporting Tool**, which is available online under *Features* at [www.marylandcancerplan.org](http://www.marylandcancerplan.org)