



Key Takeaways: Caregiver Navigation Innovations and Strategies

April 30, 2026, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) National Caregiver Support Collaborative (NCSC) hosted a webinar focused on caregiver navigation innovations and strategies on April 30, 2026. This document summarizes key content presented during the event. Additional information on this webinar and the NCSC can be found on the [NCSC website](#).

Welcome

Jonathan Westin, Aging Services Program Specialist, ACL

- The NCSC is a multifaceted initiative to increase the recognition, support, and inclusion of family, kin, and tribal caregivers across the nation, resulting in measurable improvements in the capacity of the aging network to assess caregiving needs, provide supportive services, collect data, and support the well-being of caregivers and care recipients.
- Caregiver navigation aligns directly with priorities outlined in the [National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers](#), particularly those focused on strengthening caregiver recognition, access, and person-centered support across the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-E and Title VI-C programs.
- This webinar features USAging, an NCSC grantee leading a national effort to strengthen caregiver navigation services, along with aging network organizations applying and refining practical, field-tested strategies and lessons learned.

Topic Overview: Caregiver Navigation

Darya Rahbar, Program Manager, USAging

- Caregiver navigation refers to support that helps caregivers understand, access, and coordinate services and supports, particularly those offered through the National Family Caregiver Support Program and the Native American Caregiver Support Program.
- Caregivers often struggle to navigate complex systems, making caregiver navigation critical to ensure caregivers feel informed, supported, and guided by a trusted source.
- USAging leads its NCSC grant in partnership with ADvancing States, the National Resource Center on Native American Aging, and the Scripps Gerontology Center to strengthen caregiver navigation across OAA Title III-E and VI-C programs.
- The three-year project has three phases: Year 1 focuses on discovery and landscape assessment, Year 2 on evaluation and outcomes measurement at program sites, and Year 3 on disseminating best practices, tools, and replicable models.

- USAging plans to publish findings from its environmental scan, which highlights key themes:
 - Limited research and under-recognition highlight the need to better define caregiver navigation, distinguish it from other care recipient-focused services, and build the evidence base around its impact.
 - While caregiver navigation provides strong, caregiver-centered, and individualized support, challenges such as limited funding, variable service availability, and low caregiver self-identification point to opportunities to improve outreach, streamline access, enhance outcome tracking, and leverage technology to fill gaps.
- During Year 2, USAging is evaluating activities that are underway at 14 sites nationwide, including area agencies on aging and community-based organizations, to assess caregiver outcomes, including confidence, and examine changes in caregiver strain.

Panel Discussion: Insights From the Field

Kristie Wiltgen, Chief Operating Officer, Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging

Sheila Weaver, Program Manager, Idaho Caregiver Alliance

Cindy Kincaid, Family Caregiver Program Manager, Centralina Area Agency on Aging

Defining or Describing Caregiver Navigation

- The term “caregiver navigation” is not universally used or understood. Organizations often describe this work using plain language such as “information and assistance,” “care partner support,” or simply “help.”
- Caregiver navigation can be described as walking alongside caregivers by providing personalized, ongoing guidance rather than one-time referrals, and adapting as caregivers’ needs evolve.
- Caregiver navigation meets caregivers where they are, both emotionally and practically, and recognizes that many caregivers do not identify with the caregiver label.

Leveraging Impactful Partnerships

- Partnerships are essential to delivering caregiver navigation across complex (e.g., large, rural, multi-county) service areas where no single organization can meet all needs alone.
- Examples of partnerships that support timely referrals and coordinated efforts include those with healthcare organizations or systems, emergency medical service providers, community-based and disability organizations, kinship networks, grassroots caregiver leaders, and national partners.
- Strong partnerships enable earlier caregiver outreach, often before individuals recognize themselves as caregivers or reach a point of crisis or urgent need.

Capturing Indicators and Outcomes to Evaluate Model Success

- While formal tools (e.g., surveys, screening instruments, follow-up assessments) increasingly support funder reporting, word-of-mouth referrals remain among the most meaningful indicators of impact.
- Longitudinal and relationship-based feedback, including follow-up at key intervals (e.g., 30 days), helps assess caregiver outcomes, including improvements in confidence and well-being, as well as changes in stress levels.
- Sharing evaluation findings with staff and caregivers reinforces trust and demonstrates how caregiver input directly informs program improvement.

Leveraging Technology to Deliver Caregiver Navigation

- Technology improves caregiver navigation by strengthening internal workflows, improving documentation consistency, and enhancing coordination, rather than replacing human connection.
- Examples include a web-based platform that houses caregiver assessment tools, internal templates that track caregiver reach, virtual support groups, and simple communication tools tailored to caregivers' comfort and access.
- Consider keeping technology as optional with low barriers to entry, given the wide variation in caregivers' digital access and preferences.

Questions and Answers

Speaker responses to questions submitted by members of the aging network addressed the following topics:

- **Funding approaches to support caregiver navigation**
 - Organizations can consider braided funding streams, including OAA funds, foundation grants, state initiatives (e.g., Money Follows the Person, Lifespan Respite), healthcare system partnerships, and other non-traditional grant opportunities to sustain and expand caregiver navigation services.
- **Collecting meaningful outcomes and healthcare impact data**
 - Organizations can leverage data that funders and partners already value, build streamlined collection processes over time, engage caregivers through newsletters to share information, and use both quantitative tools (e.g., screenings, surveys, follow-ups) and qualitative feedback to tell a compelling caregiver impact story.
- **Managing outreach and engagement amid capacity constraints**
 - Organizations could consider avoiding pauses in outreach when possible, as long waitlists can erode trust. Maintaining transparency and continuing to offer interim supports or alternative resources can help sustain engagement.
- **Supporting caregivers when immediate services are unavailable**
 - Organizations add value by creatively connecting caregivers to peer supports, education, support groups, or tools without waitlists. Caregiver navigation emphasizes staying engaged even when specific services are unavailable.