



# SOCIAL CARE NAVIGATION: Integrating CHWs into RUSH's Supportive Oncology Team

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## Background

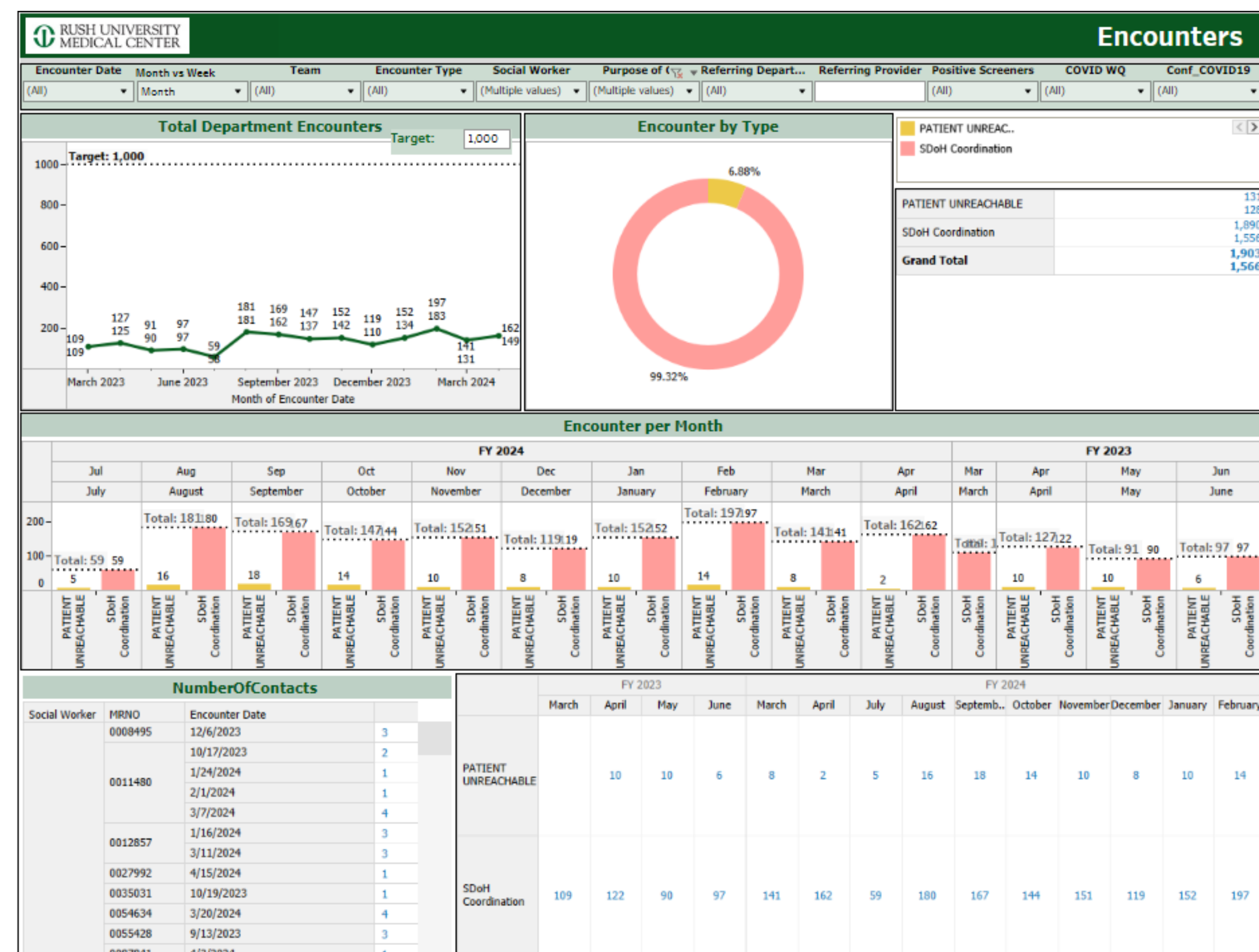
RUSH's Supportive Oncology team includes 8 social workers, 2 patient navigators, and social work interns.

- Patient navigators address short-term concerns like transportation and lodging during treatment
- Social workers address more complex needs that require long-term clinical interventions, including stress and coping concerns, financial challenges, work-related concerns, caregiving challenges, and end-of-life planning.

Community health workers (CHWs) are a key workforce as part of RUSH's system-wide health equity initiatives. In 2022, The RUSH Cancer Center began screening for patients' social needs in addition to distress screenings and referrals to social work care managers, and **ACS funding enabled the integration of 2 CHWs into the supportive oncology team** in order to meet the increased volume of need for social care assistance.

## Interim Results

Since January 2022, RUSH CHWs have provided social care outreach and assistance to **1,556 patients and families** as part of the Cancer Center's social care roll-out. **276** of those patients were for 6 month follow-up screenings and additional social care provision. Our CHWs intervene for an average of **28 minutes / intervention**, maximizing our reach and leveraging referral pathways to supportive oncology social workers and patient navigators for additional follow up.



## Project Design / Methods

CHWs are incorporated into oncology care navigation workflows to support the Cancer Center's roll-out of the social need screener. CHWs provide individualized follow-up support to patients who screen positive for at least one SDOH need, including:

- Build rapport through shared cultural & lived experiences
- Refer patients to health promotion & socialization programming
- Escalate to social workers & other care team members
- Help navigate relevant community resources
- Provide food and transportation resources
- Conduct 6-month social need re-screening

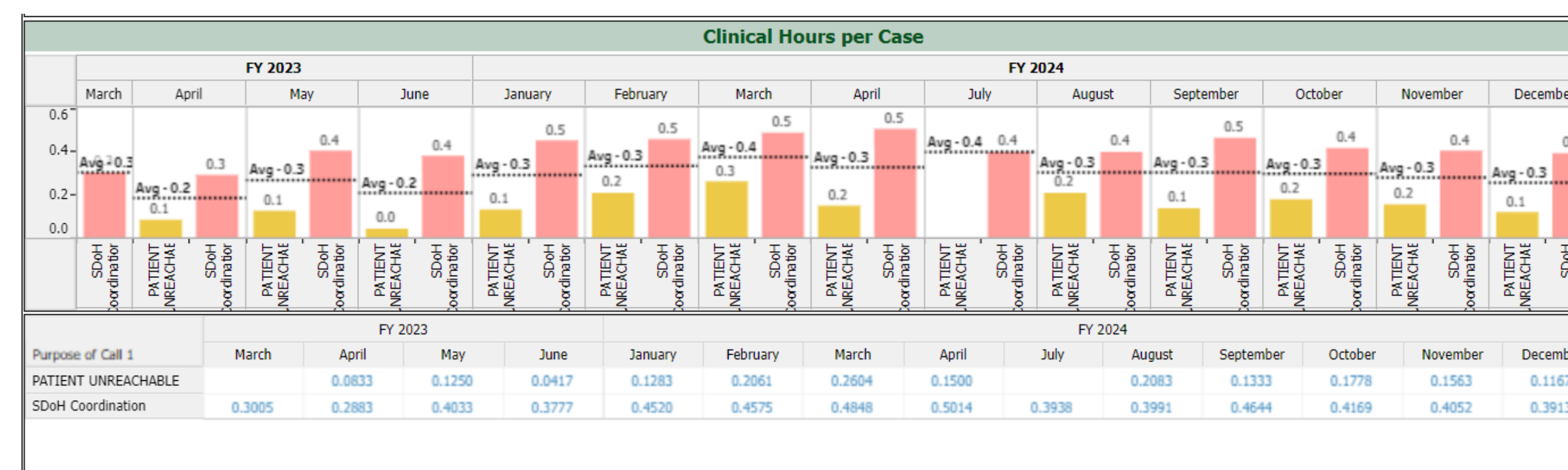
CHWs work in-person at the RUSH Cancer Center's radiation oncology and infusion clinics and collaborate closely with interprofessional team members, including Supportive Oncology and RN navigators.

## Innovation

Unique to RUSH's approach to social care navigation is the **integration of CHWs into the supportive oncology team** while being housed in and supported by a centralized professional home for CHWs at RUSH, including **training in core competencies for social care assistance** via RUSH's Center for Health and Social Care Integration.

## Implications for Sustainable Practice

- **Success in Sustainability Domains:** 1) *Engaged Staff & Leadership*; 2) *Workflow Integration*. Lessons learned include:
  - **Streamlining referral pathways for social care** helps minimize confusion among interprofessional care team members amidst the evolving roll-out of social need screenings
  - **Providing a professional home for CHWs** alongside regular consultation and training from supportive oncology leadership helps create a positive work environment and fosters quality social care provision
  - **Effective collaboration with institution health equity leaders** combined with leadership buy-in within supportive oncology and Cancer Center leadership positions team well for sustaining CHW roles within supportive oncology
- **Challenges in Sustainability Domains:** 1) *Funding Stability*; 2) *Outcomes & Effectiveness*. Efforts to address challenges include:
  - **Planning for implementation of principal illness navigation** billing by oncology care providers
  - **Refining tracking dashboards** with additional outcome data (e.g., appointment attendance) and easier viewing of screening results



INITIAL SCREENING DATE	INITIAL SCREEN - NEEDS?	ASSIGNED CHW	FIRST ATTEMPT DATE	FIRST ATTEMPT STATUS	SECOND ATTEMPT DATE	SECOND ATTEMPT STATUS
11/9/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/12/2024	Call Completed		
9/20/2022	Positive	Kelly Aguilar	3/13/2024	Call Completed		
10/2/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/13/2024	Left Voicemail		3/19/2024 Left Voicemail
10/13/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/13/2024	Pl. seen in-person		
11/2/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/13/2024	Pl. deceased		
11/2/2022	Positive	Kelly Aguilar	3/13/2024	Pl. deceased		
12/12/2022	Negative	Teresa Martinez	3/14/2024	Pl. seen in-person		
11/29/2022	Positive	Teresa Martinez	3/18/2024	Pl. seen in-person		
9/29/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/19/2024	Pl. seen in-person		
11/3/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/20/2024	Call Completed		
11/7/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/20/2024	Call Completed		
11/8/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/20/2024	Left Voicemail		3/27/2024 Left Voicemail
11/10/2022	Negative	Kelly Aguilar	3/20/2024	Unable to Leave Voicemail		3/27/2024 Call Com

## Next Steps

1. Adapt CHW workflows in response to the Cancer Center transitioning to social need e-screenings
2. Implement billing opportunities for principal illness navigation
3. Expand navigation program to additional service lines

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