



Connecting Clients to Life-Saving Treatment: Health Justice Clinic

*At the Health Justice Clinic, we take a holistic approach to advocacy, ensuring clients get the care they need. This is a story of how a **Center for Patient Partnerships** and **Health Justice Clinic** student advocate helped a client access life-saving cancer treatment.*



The Challenge of Accessing Treatment

Susan needed cancer treatment at the Mayo Clinic that could save her life, but as the sole caregiver for her sister, who required 24/7 care, moving to Minnesota for treatment seemed impossible. To make it work, she needed two things: a caregiver for her sister, and funding to cover the cost of nearly \$68,000 for 100 days of care in Minnesota. In Wisconsin, Medicaid's IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) program covered her sister's care at home, but Susan wasn't sure if IRIS would pay for care in another state.

Advocacy in Action: Finding a Solution

As part of the **Health Justice Clinic**, student advocates, also known as navigators, work alongside clients to navigate complex health care and insurance challenges, ensuring they receive the care they need. In Susan's case, accessing life-saving treatment required creative problem-solving and persistence.

For weeks, Susan and her navigator contacted disability and aging services, home care agencies, and nursing homes in both states. They explored grants and other housing options but kept hitting roadblocks. "Finally, we caught a break," the navigator recalled. "An IRIS Consultant, Rachel, discovered that out-of-state agencies could become IRIS vendors to be reimbursed by WI Medicaid for temporary moves like Susan's. Our persistence and teamwork had paid off!"

With this breakthrough, Susan found a care agency with available staff, housing in Rochester, and prepared for treatment. During the last week of summer term, she received the news: her cancer treatment was scheduled.

Reflecting on the experience, the navigator shared, "This is just a small window into a complex case where health justice meant a woman receiving life-saving treatment despite being unable to afford a critical component."



“ As a navigator, I gained knowledge about community partners that close the gaps in care experienced by our underserved communities. I valued the impact from connecting folks to programs that worked to fill their needs. This experience now serves me well as a Referrals Coordinator on the MEDiC Council at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, where I coordinate patient referrals. I have come full circle, connecting patients with community resources as a medical student that I learned of as a resource navigator. I am committed to helping our patients receive the best care no matter their circumstances.”



– NOAH, CURRENT MEDICAL
STUDENT, FORMER HEALTH JUSTICE
CLINIC NAVIGATOR



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for Patient
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